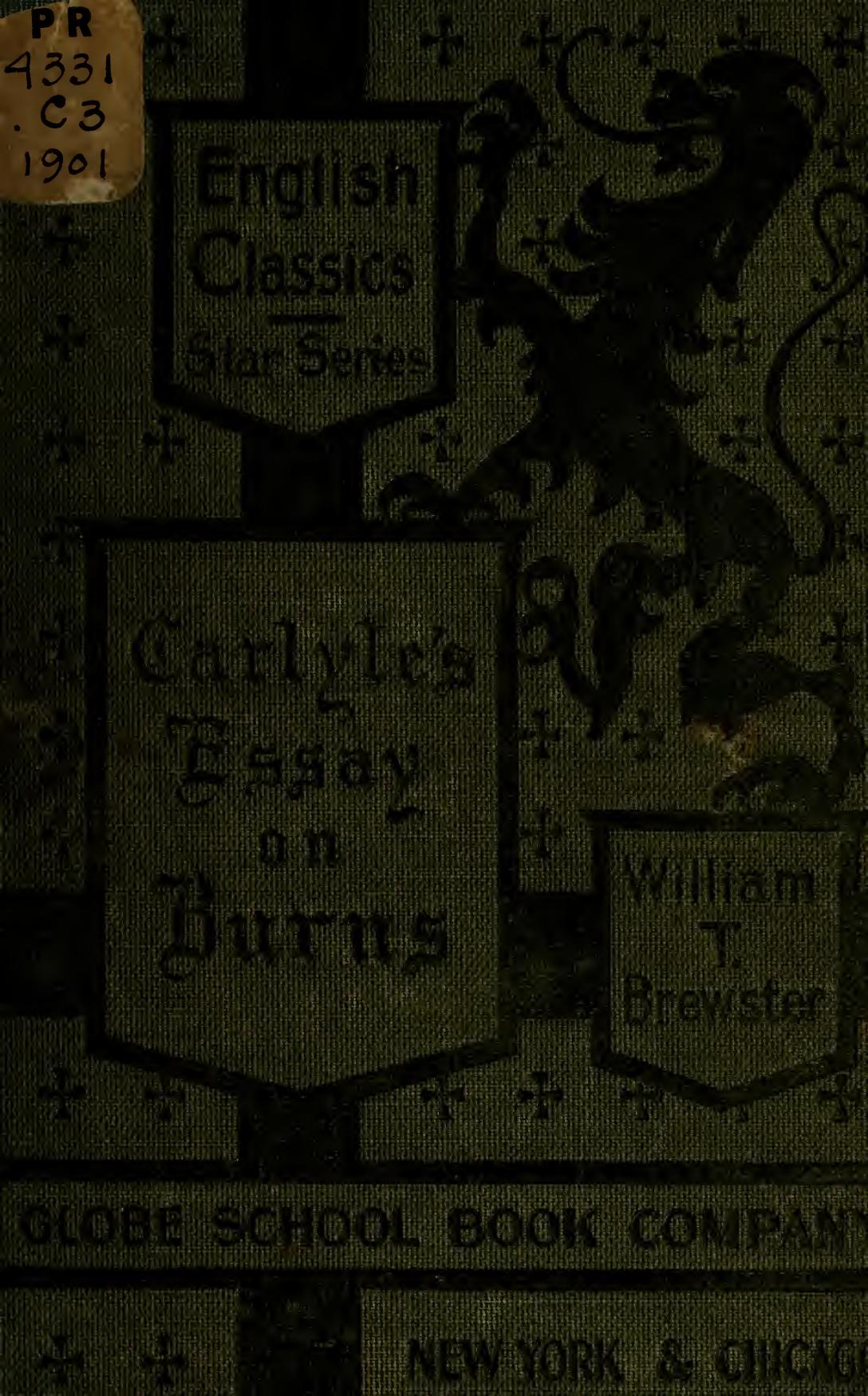


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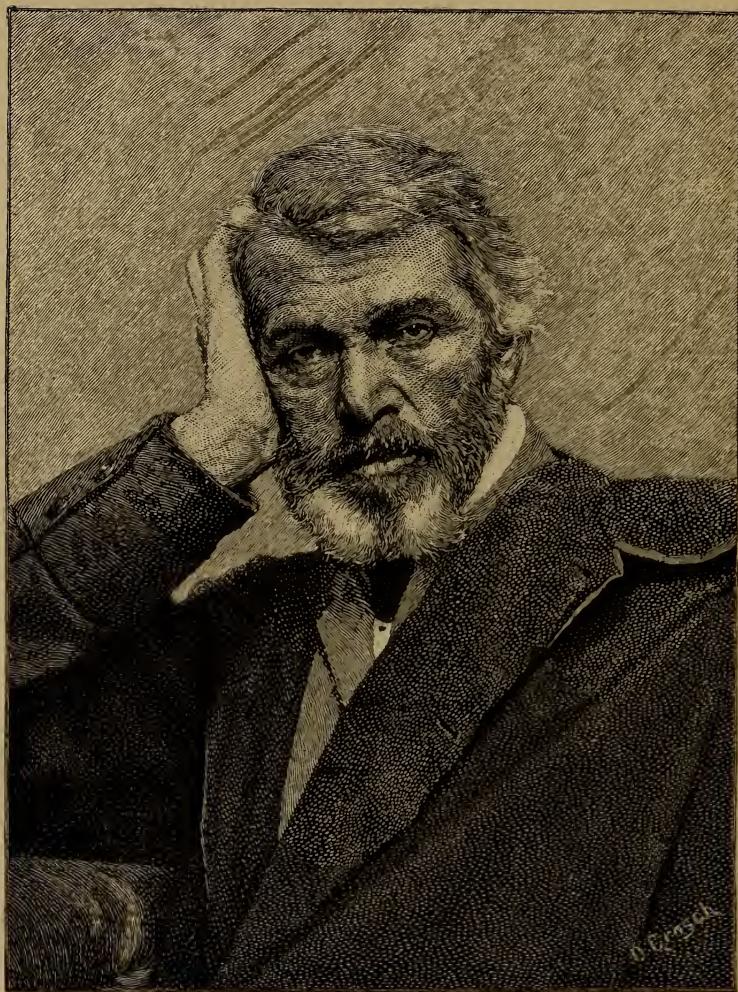


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THOMAS CARLYLE.
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CARLYLE'S

ESSAY ON BURNS

EDITED FOR SCHOOL USE

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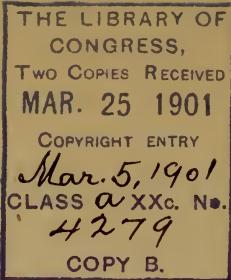
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PREFACE

THE immediate object of this edition of Carlyle's *Essay on Burns* is to lay before the student of the college preparatory school the text of the admirable essay, accompanied by such notes and explanations as shall make clear to him its meaning as a whole and in detail, and its relation to the life and work of the author. There is, of course, no attempt to make the treatment exhaustive. The more important aim is to render more accessible and hence more interesting, in the best sense of the word, a very small portion of the work of two of the worthiest figures in English literature. In pursuing such an end the editor's duty clearly is to allow his subjects as freely as possible to speak for themselves. This principle will be found to underlie the arrangement of this edition and to account for the presence, in an appendix, of certain of the poems of Burns.

In preparing this edition, I have drawn from the authorities cited in the Bibliography at the end of the volume. I wish to express my obligation to former editors of this essay, especially to Mr. Wilson Farrand of Newark Academy (Longmans, 1898) and Professor George R. Noyes of the University of Wisconsin (The Riverside Press, 1896), without whose valuable notes the work would have been far more difficult.

W. T. B.

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY,
January 22, 1901.

INTRODUCTION

THOMAS CARLYLE

THOMAS CARLYLE was born December 4, 1795; more than eighty-five years later he died, February 4, 1881. The space of years covered by his life marks, more than that of almost any of his contemporaries, the great literary production of the nineteenth century. At the time of his birth, of the greater literary men of the eighteenth century, only Burns, Burke, Cowper, and Sheridan were living, and of these only the last survived into the next century. Three years after Carlyle's birth, the publication of the *Lyrical Ballads* of Wordsworth and Coleridge may be said, so far as the remark can be made of any one book, to have ushered in the new literary era; both of these men Carlyle outlived by many years. The great poets, Byron, Shelley, and Keats, achieved fame and died while Carlyle was yet a young man, and the *Waverley Novels* began to appear only when he was nineteen. De Quincey, Lamb, and Landor produced nothing of moment before the beginning of the century, and the last and longest-lived of these Carlyle survived by seventeen years. The lives of Dickens, Thackeray, George Eliot, Macaulay, and John Stuart Mill are comprehended within the span of his life. By the time of his death, too, he had seen the flower of the great names who outlived him; by 1881, the best poetry of Tennyson, Browning, and Arnold had been written; in prose, Newman, Arnold and Ruskin, Freeman, Froude and Lecky, Darwin and Spencer, had done the work on which their fame will rest. Of American authors of the same period, Irving and Cooper were writing while

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Carlyle was struggling in Edinburgh and Craigenputtock; Prescott, Poe, and Hawthorne are compassed in the period of his life, and Emerson and Longfellow died only one year later than he. The story of his own life is the tale of years of struggle, of growing and final recognition as a man of letters with an influence second to that of none of his contemporaries.

The place of Carlyle's birth was Ecclefechan, near Annandale in Dumfriesshire, the county of Scotland where Burns had passed his last years. Carlyle's parents, like those of the poet, though descended through a long ancestry, were poor. James Carlyle, the father, was by occupation a mason, at which he sometimes made a hundred pounds a year; in character he was not unlike William Burness. The mother was Margaret Aitken, and Thomas Carlyle was the eldest of nine children. Like the parents of Burns, the elder Carlysles were people of integrity and piety; they watched over their children with exceeding devotion, and gave them all the education in their power. Carlyle, who early displayed his uncommon ability, was sent to the schools in the neighborhood, and by the age of thirteen was ready to enter Edinburgh University. He was intended by his parents for the ministry in the Scotch Church, but while at Edinburgh was apparently so assailed with religious doubts as to make the step impossible. During a few years after leaving the University, he taught school, first at Annan Academy as tutor in mathematics, and later at Kirkcaldy, where he made the acquaintance of Edward Irving, one of his warmest friends; Irving's library enabled Carlyle to gratify his love of reading and to mitigate the weariness which he felt at teaching. In October, 1818, however, teaching had become so distasteful to him that he resigned from his school, and went to Edinburgh to try to earn his living.

The years at Edinburgh mark perhaps the lowest state in the life of Carlyle. He was tormented with dyspepsia and

was greatly depressed in spirit. Miserably poor, almost the only employment he had for a time was the writing of encyclopedia articles. The condition of his mind at this time is best described by the "Everlasting No" of *Sartor Resartus*. Toward the middle of 1821, however, he seems by superb resolution and energy of will to have shaken off his despondency and determined to meet life sternly and with unflinching face. In attaining this new position he was greatly influenced by his reading of German, particularly of Goethe, the mystic Johann Paul Friedrich Richter, and the philosopher Fichte. German literature was at that time his most absorbing study, and during the next decade he wrote many articles on the subject, of which his *Life of Schiller* and his translation of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* are the most important. They brought him not so much money as some fame and the acquaintance of the great German poet. Carlyle, however, was in considerably better circumstances; from 1822-1824 he was tutor in a well-to-do family, the Bullers, from whom he received two hundred pounds a year for not uncongenial work.

In 1826 Carlyle married Jane Baillie Welsh, a woman in many ways as remarkable as himself. For two years the couple lived near Edinburgh, where Carlyle wrote some articles for the *Edinburgh Review*. In 1828 Carlyle and his wife removed to Craigenputtock in Dumfriesshire, and it was here in the same year that he wrote his *Essay on Burns* for the *Review*. The place is more famous, however, as being the scene of the composition of the book which is perhaps most intimately associated with his name, the work which first springs into mind when Carlyle's name is mentioned — *Sartor Resartus*. The book is so remarkable and so much a history of the intellectual and emotional life of the author that a word may be said about it. It is impossible, of course, in the limits of the present space, to give more than the briefest account of the literary work of the author.

Sartor Resartus purports to be a review by an English editor of a treatise by a learned German professor, Herr Teufelsdröckh, with whose life and opinions it deals. The doctrine of the book is the famous Philosophy of Clothes, in the main symbolical of Carlyle's creed at the time—that as clothes express the taste of the wearer, so institutions, customs, and even moral life may be regarded as the vesture of the mind, to be changed and altered at its will. The most interesting part of the work is the account of the moral attire of Teufelsdröckh, who is Carlyle himself. It is the tale of early suffering, lack of sympathy from fellow-men, disappointment in the affairs both of the head and of the heart, despondency and despair over the great question why man is in the universe, doubt and wavering, and final acceptance of the facts of existence with hope of solution through stern and persistent endeavor. It is in reality a prose epic of the inner life, the life, perhaps, though the ultimate solution may not be the same, of every young man of serious and thoughtful temperament who, in the years of expanding mind, has been troubled with the great questions of human destiny.

The publication of *Sartor Resartus* was begun in *Fraser's Magazine* in December, 1833, but the opinions and the manner of writing raised a storm of protest among the subscribers to the periodical. The serial came to an end in August, 1834, and it was in America, in 1836, that it first appeared in book form. Meanwhile, in 1834, the Carlysles had removed to London, where they henceforth lived. The author was then about to begin another of the works which come to mind when his name is mentioned, *The French Revolution*, a series of striking and brilliant scenes and incidents from that most dramatic event. Begun in 1834, it was completed in 1837, and its success was more considerable than any that had yet greeted Carlyle. He was enabled to obtain a hearing for several courses of lectures which he delivered in the two

or three years following. One of these, *On Heroes and Hero-Worship*, published in 1841 in book form, is characteristic enough to demand a special word.

With the possible exception of "*Sartor*" and the *French Revolution*," Heroes and Hero-Worship" is Carlyle's most widely read production. It is perhaps the clearest expression of his philosophy. *Sartor*, as we have seen, may be regarded as a prose epic of the inner life. The struggle done, the point of view attained, the principles fixed, we have in the later book the author's view of the facts of human progress. "As I take it," he says, "Universal History, the history of what man has accomplished in this world, is at bottom the History of the Great Men who have worked there." And, further on in the introduction, he states what is really the moral purpose of the book: "We cannot look, however imperfectly, upon a great man, without gaining something by him. He is the living light-fountain, which it is good and pleasant to be near." Again, speaking of the Hero as a Man of Letters, he gives us the purpose of all his own writing, "The Writer of a Book, is he not a Preacher preaching not to this parish or that, on this day or that, but to all men in all times and places?" He considers the hero in six aspects, as Divinity, as Prophet, as Poet, as Priest, as Man of Letters, and as King, and under each he gives us, with impressive power and insight, in some of the most penetrative passages of criticism, the characters of exemplary world heroes. His sketch of the hero in Burns, in the Hero as a Man of Letters, should be compared with the earlier essay which is the subject of this volume.

Certainly the major part of the work of Carlyle after this book is an illustration of the principles of history there enunciated. Some quasi-political essays he wrote, as *Chartism* in 1839, *Past and Present* in 1843, and *Latter Day Pamphlets* in 1850, but chiefly he dealt with men as the

great movers of history. Several of his reviews of the period, as well as of the earlier years, deal with men of letters, but, as we know from the *Essay on Burns*, what interested Carlyle was the life of the man as a human being struggling in the world and conquering his destiny, rather than his mere literary product. After *Heroes and Hero-Worship*, Carlyle had little to say about men of letters pure and simple. In 1845 appeared his *Cromwell*, over which he had toiled for several years; in 1851 the life of his friend John Sterling, a man who, like Arthur Hallam, is chiefly remembered through his friendship with a greater man; and in the same year was projected the vastest of all his undertakings, "The History of Frederick II." Over this work he labored thirteen years, the final volumes appearing in 1865, and into them he put his best thought and energy. Frederick is the center of the picture, the master of the show, but the picture is the panorama of the state of Europe during the time of the great king, for the completeness and perfection of which Carlyle left no stone unturned.

Frederick marks the climax of Carlyle's life. It won him in England recognition as the foremost of prose writers, and in Germany, too, his fame grew naturally great. Even the people of his native Scotland were conquered of their opposition to him and he was elected Lord Rector of the University of Edinburgh. Testimony of an affecting sort came the following year on the sudden death of Mrs. Carlyle; even the Queen added her message of condolence. The year marks the beginning of his decline. He was seventy years of age, and the labor of *Frederick* had left him worn and weary. A few travels and some books mark this latter period; of his books *The Early Kings of Norway*, 1775, is the most important. There was given to the public by his literary executor, Froude, shortly after his decease, his *Reminiscences of Jane Carlyle and of Jeffrey*

and Edward Irving, in the writing of which he had found solace in the months following the death of his wife.

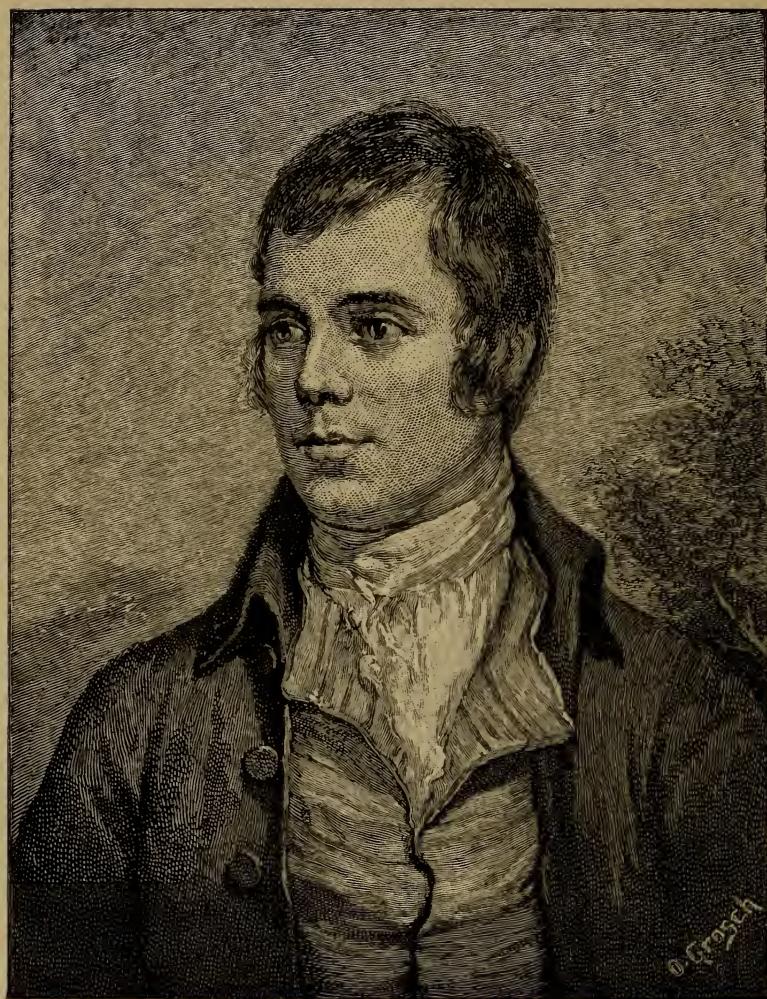
The position of Carlyle as a man of letters is second to that of none of the great prose writers who have influenced men in this century. His influence, however, like that of Samuel Johnson in the preceding century, is the personal influence of the powerful and upright man rather than that of the philosopher or the discoverer of new truth. His integrity, his independence, his earnestness, his vitality, his matchless vigor,—these are the qualities which count in him; for they are a part of his character as well as of his style. He was the sincerest of men, a stern hater of sham, cant, and affectation. As a system, his work, as his critics say, is unscientific and often untrue; like the younger enthusiast, John Ruskin, he could see little good in the laborious, systematic, thorough teachings of modern science; though men like Darwin and Spencer have perhaps done most to determine the basal facts of life. Carlyle is rather, then, to be judged as the seer, the prophet, the preacher, who feels deeply the meaning of life, and exhorts his readers to feel rightly and to live rightly, to "do the duty which lies next you," to "work and despair not." Carlyle often appeared morose, surly, ungrateful to his benefactors, impatient of censure or criticism, at times querulous, but whatever disagreeable traits were his came from a man confident in his own integrity, speaking from the fullness of his heart. Sincerity is the keynote of his character, as is vigor of his style. He felt that he had a word to say to the world, he spoke his message fearlessly and unswervingly, and, in the end, never seeking for popular favor, compelled the world to accept him.

A word may be added with regard to the particular essay which is the subject of this volume. It is possibly the best point at which to begin the study of Carlyle. The qualities

of the essay, its warmth of feeling, its sincerity of purpose, its deep humanity, are those of Carlyle at all times. Passages like paragraph 39 (p. 36) are thoroughly typical of his views of life ; they are to be compared with the struggle of Teufelsdröckh in 'Sartor Resartus'. The subject, too, is one for which Carlyle must have had the utmost sympathy ; he and the poet Burns, had the two men been contemporary, would have been near neighbors, and the land of Burns was nearly as familiar to the essayist as to Burns himself. A not unnoticeable similarity in the character of their parents and their training has already been pointed out. In a worldly sense, the advantage lay with the later man, slightly ; but, though Carlyle's path in the world led to success and Burns's to failure, Carlyle had that perfect understanding of the poet which is necessary to good criticism. Burns has no juster or more sympathetic advocate.

Furthermore, the Essay on Burns is a good starting-point for the study of Carlyle, because, though characteristic of the author, it represents his earlier and less abnormal manner of writing. Crowded though it is with allusion, interrogation, and brilliant figure, it is clearer and more orderly in point of syntax than the later works. Compared with 'Sartor Resartus' and 'Heroes and Hero-Worship', there are to be found in it few of the inversions, the twists, the figures becoming symbols, the intense emphasis. Like the later work, it may possibly be regarded as technically loose in structure ; the point need not be elaborated, since no one can have difficulty in seeing what Carlyle is driving at or in gaining a strong and lasting impression.

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ROBERT BURNS.
After the painting by Alexander Nasmyth.

NOTE ON THE LIFE OF BURNS

(The following paragraphs are intended merely to state the chief facts in the life of Burns to which Carlyle makes reference and to form a very general sketch of his life.)

ROBERT BURNS was born on the 25th of January, 1759, at Alloway, a small village some two miles south of the town of Ayr on the west coast of Scotland. His father was William Burnes or Burness, a gardener and farmer by occupation, of the peasant class, but with a long ancestry ; his mother was Alice Broun or Brown, a woman of about the same rank as her husband. Both were people of the best Scotch peasant type, sturdy, intelligent, and God-fearing, though the father was perhaps the more extraordinary of the two ; of him Burns has left a loving picture in *The Cotter's Saturday Night*. The place of the poet's birth was a small hut of clay and thatch, which his father had built on the farm of seven acres ; it was here that Burns spent the first seven years of his life. At that time William Burnes removed to a better farm at Mount Oliphant, about two miles distant, and here the family lived till the poet was in his eighteenth year.

It was while living on these two farms on the outskirts of Ayr that the poet gained all the education of a systematic sort that he ever had. His father, with an enlightenment unusual even among Scotch peasants, gave his children the best schooling in his power. By his fifteenth year Burns, though compelled by the poverty of his parents to do the work of a grown man on the farm, had acquired a very unusual command of the English language, knew considerable French, and had a smattering of Latin, learned in the seasons when farm work was least pressing. His tutor, John Murdoch, also lent him books from his own rather scant library, and Burns, at this time, had done an unusual

amount of reading for a boy of his age. The same year of his life is marked by his first extant poem, *Handsome Nell*, in honor of a peasant girl a year younger than himself, his partner in the harvesting. This poem is the first recorded expression of the poet of the susceptibility of temperament which was one of his marked traits of character and is so frequently to be found in his songs.

In 1777 William Burness removed from the farm at Mount Oliphant to a larger and better one, Lochlea, in the parish of Tarbolton, some five miles northeast of Ayr. The cause of his change was the fact that, on the death of the owner of the Mount Oliphant farm, the overseer became so oppressive that it was only by the closest economy that the family of Burns was able to maintain itself, and hence did not renew the lease. At Lochlea, William Burns hoped to experience better times, and indeed did for a few years seem to be more fortunate. He, however, became involved with his landlord in disputes over his lease; a long series of lawsuits used up his money; and finally, broken in health from his long life of toil, he died, in February, 1784. Foreseeing the outcome of their father's suit, Robert Burns and his brother Gilbert had previously taken a farm two or three miles away, at Mossiel, in the parish of Mauchline, and hither the family, on the death of the father, took its way.

At Lochlea, Burns composed comparatively little poetry; of the poems named or alluded to by Carlyle only the *Poor Mailie's Elegy* was written here, but the stay at Lochlea was distinguished by one of his best-known lyrics, To Mary Morrison. It was during this period that Burns made his visit to Irvine mentioned on page 38. Irvine was a small seaport eleven miles to the north of Ayr and rather nearer Lochlea; the distance is mentioned, as in former instances, merely to show the smallness of the region in which the poet's life had been lived. It was in the winter of 1781-1782 that Burns

made the trip. Wishing to establish himself more independently and felicitously in the world, he went to Irvine and there engaged in flax-growing, in partnership with a man named Peacock, a distant relative of his mother's. The business did not prosper; on New Year's night, while Burns and his partner were carousing, their shop burned to the ground and left them penniless. Burns, too, fell in with a set of wayfaring men and smugglers at this seaport town who were apparently of less austere life than he had been accustomed to in the interior of the country. He was, moreover, seized with melancholy, which left a deep impression on him and tormented him with thoughts of death; nor even after his return to Lochlea in 1782 did he regain his tranquillity.

The period of Burns's residence at Mossiel is the most important in his life. It was here between 1784 and 1786 that he wrote the most famous of his poems, among them *The Cotter's Saturday Night*, *Hallowe'en*, *The Jolly Beggars*, *The Brigs of Ayr*, *To a Mouse*, *The Vision*, *A Winter Night*, *Scotch Drink*, *To a Mountain Daisy*, and the best known of his satires, *The Holy Fair*, *Holy Willie's Prayer*, *An Address to the De'il*, and others. A word with regard to the situation of the poet and the occasion of his satires may be interesting. The town of Mauchline, of about a thousand inhabitants, was, like the rest of the region, torn with religious discussion. There were two theological parties among the clergy, the so-called "Auld Lights" and "New Lights." The former represented the old rigid Calvinistic faith and judged without mercy or charity those who were not so positive and dogmatic as themselves. Their opponents, the "New Lights," were far more liberal, believed less in predestination, took a more charitable and common-sense view of things; and to them Burns was by temperament inclined. The immediate cause of the poet's satires was, however, the persecution which his friend and landlord, Gavin Hamilton, a "writer," suffered from the

tongues of the “Old Lights.” The reader must imagine that in so small a town as Mauchline, where Burns was probably personally known to every inhabitant and where the feud waxed warm, his stirring verses would have had a pretty general currency, whether for favor or disapproval. It is certain that he was looked upon by the New Light clergy as their champion, though his satire was in itself often enough very irreverent.

But meanwhile the farm did not prosper. Early in 1786, Burns, disgusted with his ill fortune and almost desperate, determined to flee Scotland to begin life afresh in the New World. He had actually engaged passage for Jamaica, where a place on a plantation at thirty pounds a year, a considerably larger sum than he had ever had for a year’s service in Scotland, was open to him. Through the influence of his friend Hamilton, however, he determined to help pay for the expenses of his passage by putting together enough of his poems to furnish a volume. He obtained three hundred and fifty subscribers in advance, and had an edition of six hundred printed. This event was the turning-point in his career. Through the favorable reception of the volume at Edinburgh, and particularly through the encouragement of Dr. Blacklock, Burns determined to go to the capital of Scotland, where, in Carlyle’s phrase, he “came on the world as a prodigy.”

For convenience, a second period of Burns’s life may be regarded as beginning with this journey to Edinburgh. Up to this event he “had found himself in the deepest obscurity.” From now on he became, as it were, a public character. For about two years he lived at intervals in the capital, where the second edition of his poems, liberally subscribed to by the gentlemen of the Caledonian Hunt, placed him in unwonted fortune — he received about six hundred pounds as proceeds — and enabled him to make several tours about Scotland. In 1788 he gave up Edinburgh for good, and leased a farm, Ellisland, at Dalswinton in Dumfriesshire, whither tourists came



ROBERT BURNS.
Profile taken in Edinburgh in 1787.

to visit him. At about this time also he was through the influence of his friends appointed excise commissioner. The duties of the excise man were the weighing of imported goods and domestic produce, as liquors, of a dutiable nature, but the poet did not enter very actively into this work until the failure of his farming scheme, after about three years, compelled him to seek other and surer means of livelihood, even though of so uncongenial a sort. In the latter part of 1791 he removed to Dumfries, a city in the extreme southwest of Scotland. To this period of his life belong most of his famous "Songs," as distinguished from his longer poems.

At Dumfries Burns soon gained the distrust of the higher classes by his attitude with regard to the French Revolution. Though a patriotic Briton, he showed much sympathy for the struggle of the French people for their rights, and, though on the outbreak of war between England and France he joined a company of local volunteers, one or two jests of his served to gain him the hatred of the conservative people, a circumstance to which Carlyle makes reference (page 50). At this time, too, the poet, though never a drunkard, was not so uniformly sober as in his earlier days. Toward the middle of 1795 his health began to break down, and by the spring of the following year he was the prey of rheumatic fevers. He died on the 21st of July, 1796, in the thirty-eighth year of his age.

Such are, in brief, the main events in the life of the poet. His life was short and, in appearance, not a happy one; indeed, from a worldly point of view it was even miserable, for Burns was too great a poet to be a successful business man, too proud to be habitually dependent on patronage. It is worth while remembering, too, that his poems were for the most part "mere occasional effusions," sung to himself, for example, while following the plow or lying in wait for smugglers. Yet he was almost the only poet of the time to attain lasting eminence; the age was possibly, as Carlyle

says, "the most prosaic Britain had yet seen." Of the earlier poets, Collins died the year of Burns's birth and Gray when he was fifteen. Goldsmith and Johnson had at the time of their death, in 1774 and 1784, long been regarded as prose writers, and the other great writers of the period, as Gibbon and Burke, made no claim on poetry. Cowper and Blake were the only poets who can be called contemporaries of Burns; for Wordsworth and Coleridge did not initiate the great new life of the nineteenth century until two years after the death of Burns. The work of the Scotch poet is original in time, place, and circumstance.



ROBERT BURNS.
After the drawing by Archibald Skirving.



BURNS¹

1. IN the modern arrangements of society, it is no uncommon thing that a man of genius must, like Butler, "ask for bread and receive a stone;" for, in spite of our grand maxim of supply and demand, it is by no means the 5 highest excellence that men are most forward to recognise.

The inventor of a spinning-jenny is pretty sure of his reward in his own day; but the writer of a true poem, like the apostle of a true religion, is nearly as sure of the contrary. We do not know whether it is not an aggravation of the 10 injustice, that there is generally a posthumous retribution.

Robert Burns, in the course of Nature, might yet have been living; but his short life was spent in toil and penury; and he died, in the prime of his manhood, miserable and neglected: and yet already a brave mausoleum shines over 15 his dust, and more than one splendid monument has been reared in other places to his fame; the street where he languished in poverty is called by his name; the highest personages in our literature have been proud to appear as his commentators and admirers; and here is the *sixth* narrative of his *Life* that has been given to the world!

2. Mr. Lockhart thinks it necessary to apologise for this new attempt on such a subject: but his readers, we believe, will readily acquit him; or, at worst, will censure only the performance of his task, not the choice of it. 25 The character of Burns, indeed, is a theme that cannot easily become either trite or exhausted; and will probably gain rather than lose in its dimensions by the distance to

¹ *Edinburgh Review*, No. 96.—*The Life of Robert Burns.* By J. G. Lockhart, LL.B. Edinburgh, 1828.

which it is removed by Time. No man, it has been said, is a hero to his valet; and this is probably true; but the 30 fault is at least as likely to be the valet's as the hero's.

For it is certain, that to the vulgar eye few things are wonderful that are not distant. It is difficult for men to believe that the man, the mere man whom they see, nay perhaps painfully feel, toiling at their side through the 35 poor jostlings of existence, can be made of finer clay than themselves. Suppose that some dining acquaintance of Sir Thomas Lucy's, and neighbour of John a Combe's, had snatched an hour or two from the preservation of his game, and written us a Life of Shakespeare! What dissertations 40 should we not have had, — not on *Hamlet* and *The Tempest*, but on the wool-trade, and deer-stealing, and the libel and vagrant laws; and how the Poacher became a Player; and how Sir Thomas and Mr. John had Christian bowels, and did not push him to extremities! In like 45 manner, we believe, with respect to Burns, that till the companions of his pilgrimage, the Honourable Excise Commissioners, and the Gentlemen of the Caledonian Hunt, and the Dumfries Aristocracy, and all the Squires and Earls, equally with the Ayr Writers, and the New and Old 50 Light Clergy, whom he had to do with, shall have become invisible in the darkness of the Past, or visible only by light borrowed from *his* juxtaposition, it will be difficult to measure him by any true standard, or to estimate what he really was and did, in the eighteenth century, for his 55 country and the world. It will be difficult, we say; but still a fair problem for literary historians; and repeated attempts will give us repeated approximations.

3. His former Biographers have done something, no doubt, but by no means a great deal, to assist us. Dr. 60 Currie and Mr. Walker, the principal of these writers, have both, we think, mistaken one essentially important thing: Their own and the world's true relation to their

author, and the style in which it became such men to think and to speak of such a man. Dr. Currie loved the 65 poet truly; more perhaps than he avowed to his readers, or even to himself; yet he everywhere introduces him with a certain patronising, apologetic air; as if the polite public might think it strange and half unwarrantable that he, a man of science, a scholar and gentleman, should do such 70 honour to a rustic. In all this, however, we readily admit that his fault was not want of love, but weakness of faith; and regret that the first and kindest of all our poet's biographers should not have seen farther, or believed more boldly what he saw. Mr. Walker offends more deeply in 75 the same kind: and both err alike in presenting us with a detached catalogue of his several supposed attributes, virtues and vices, instead of a delineation of the resulting character as a living unity. This, however, is not painting a portrait; but gauging the length and breadth of 80 the several features, and jotting down their dimensions in arithmetical ciphers. Nay it is not so much as that: for we are yet to learn by what arts or instruments the mind *could* be so measured and gauged.

4. Mr. Lockhart, we are happy to say, has avoided both 85 these errors. He uniformly treats Burns as the high and remarkable man the public voice has now pronounced him to be: and in delineating him, he has avoided the method of separate generalities, and rather sought for characteristic incidents, habits, actions, sayings; in a word, for aspects which exhibit the whole man, as he looked and lived among his fellows. The book accordingly, with all its deficiencies, gives more insight, we think, into the true character of Burns, than any prior biography: though, being written on the very popular and condensed scheme of 90 an article for *Constable's Miscellany* it has less depth than we could have wished and expected from a writer of such power; and contains rather more, and more multifarious

quotations than belong of right to an original production. Indeed, Mr. Lockhart's own writing is generally so good, 100 so clear, direct and nervous, that we seldom wish to see it making place for another man's. However, the spirit of the work is throughout candid, tolerant and anxiously conciliating; compliments and praises are liberally distributed, on all hands, to great and small; and, as Mr. Morris 105 Birkbeck observes of the society in the backwoods of America, "the courtesies of polite life are never lost sight of for a moment." But there are better things than these in the volume; and we can safely testify, not only that it is easily and pleasantly read a first time, but may even be without 110 difficulty read again.

5. Nevertheless, we are far from thinking that the problem of Burns's Biography has yet been adequately solved. We do not allude so much to deficiency of facts or documents,—though of these we are still every day receiving 115 some fresh accession,—as to the limited and imperfect application of them to the great end of Biography. Our notions upon this subject may perhaps appear extravagant; but if an individual is really of consequence enough to have his life and character recorded for public remembrance, we 120 have always been of opinion that the public ought to be made acquainted with all the inward springs and relations of his character.] How did the world and man's life, from his particular position, represent themselves to his mind? How did coexisting circumstances modify him from within 125 out; how did he modify these from within? With what endeavours and what efficacy rule over them; with what resistance and what suffering sink under them? In one word, what and how produced was the effect of society on him; what and how produced was his effect on society? 130 He who should answer these questions, in regard to any individual, would, as we believe, furnish a model of perfection in Biography. Few individuals, indeed, can de-

serve such a study; and many *lives* will be written, and, for the gratification of innocent curiosity, ought to be 135 written, and read and forgotten, which are not in this sense *biographies*. But Burns, if we mistake not, is one of these few individuals; and such a study, at least with such a result, he has not yet obtained. Our own contributions to it, we are aware, can be but scanty and feeble; but 140 we offer them with good-will, and trust they may meet with acceptance from those they are intended for.

6. Burns first came upon the world as a prodigy; and was, in that character, entertained by it, in the usual fashion, with loud, vague, tumultuous wonder, speedily subsiding 145 into censure and neglect; till his early and most mournful death again awakened an enthusiasm for him, which, especially as there was now nothing to be done, and much to be spoken, has prolonged itself even to our own time. It is true, the "nine days" have long since elapsed; and the very 150 continuance of this clamour proves that Burns was no vulgar wonder. Accordingly, even in sober judgments, where, as years passed by, he has come to rest more and more exclusively on his own intrinsic merits, and may now be well-nigh shorn of that casual radiance, he appears not only as a true 155 British poet, but as one of the most considerable British men of the eighteenth century. Let it not be objected that he did little. He did much, if we consider where and how. If the work performed was small, we must remember that he had his very materials to discover; for the metal he worked 160 in lay hid under the desert moor, where no eye but his had guessed its existence; and we may almost say, that with his own hand he had to construct the tools for fashioning it. For he found himself in deepest obscurity, without help, without instruction, without model; or with models only of 165 the meanest sort. [An educated man stands, as it were, in the midst of a boundless arsenal and magazine, filled with

all the weapons and engines which man's skill has been able to devise from the earliest time; and he works, accordingly, with a strength borrowed from all past ages.] How different is *his* state who stands on the outside of that storehouse, and feels that its gates must be stormed, or remain forever shut against him! His means are the commonest and rudest; the mere work done is no measure of his strength. A dwarf behind his steam-engine may remove mountains; but 175 no dwarf will hew them down with a pickaxe; and he must be a Titan that hurls them abroad with his arms.

7. It is in this last shape that Burns presents himself. Born in an age the most prosaic Britain had yet seen, and in a condition the most disadvantageous, where his mind, if 180 it accomplished aught, must accomplish it under the pressure of continual bodily toil, nay, of penury and desponding apprehension of the worst evils, and with no furtherance but such knowledge as dwells in a poor man's hut, and the rhymes of a Ferguson or Ramsay for his standard of beauty, 185 he sinks not under all these impediments: through the fogs and darkness of that obscure region, his lynx eye discerns the true relations of the world and human life; he grows into intellectual strength, and trains himself into intellectual expertness. Impelled by the expansive movement of his 190 own irrepressible soul, he struggles forward into the general view; and with haughty modesty lays down before us, as the fruit of his labour, a gift, which Time has now pronounced imperishable. Add to all this, that his darksome drudging childhood and youth was by far the kindest era 195 of his whole life; and that he died in his thirty-seventh year: and then ask, If it be strange that his poems are imperfect, and of small extent, or that his genius attained no mastery in its art? Alas, his Sun shone as through a tropical tornado; and the pale Shadow of Death eclipsed it at 200 noon! Shrouded in such baleful vapours, the genius of Burns was never seen in clear azure splendour, enlightening



INTERIOR OF BURNS' COTTAGE AT ALLOWAY.

From a photograph.

the world: but some beams from it did, by fits, pierce through; and it tinted those clouds with rainbow and orient colours, into a glory and stern grandeur, which men silently 205 gazed on with wonder and tears!

8. We are anxious not to exaggerate; for it is exposition rather than admiration that our readers require of us here; and yet to avoid some tendency to that side is no easy matter. We love Burns, and we pity him; and love and pity 210 are prone to magnify. Criticism, it is sometimes thought, should be a cold business; we are not so sure of this; but, at all events, our concern with Burns is not exclusively that of critics. True and genial as his poetry must appear, it is not chiefly as a poet, but as a man, that he interests and 215 affects us. He was often advised to write a tragedy: time and means were not lent him for this; but through life he enacted a tragedy, and one of the deepest. We question whether the world has since witnessed so utterly sad a scene; whether Napoleon himself, left to bawl with Sir 220 Hudson Lowe, and perish on his rock, "amid the melancholy main," presented to the reflecting mind such a "spectacle of pity and fear" as did this intrinsically nobler, gentler and perhaps greater soul, wasting itself away in a hopeless struggle with base entanglements, which coiled closer and 225 closer round him, till only death opened him an outlet.

Conquerors are a class of men with whom, for most part, the world could well dispense; nor can the hard intellect, the unsympathising loftiness and high but selfish enthusiasm of such persons inspire us in general with any affection; at 230 best it may excite amazement; and their fall, like that of a pyramid, will be beheld with a certain sadness and awe. But a true Poet, a man in whose heart resides some effluence of Wisdom, some tone of the "Eternal Melodies," is the most precious gift that can be bestowed on a generation: we 235 see in him a freer, purer development of whatever is noblest in ourselves; his life is a rich lesson to us; and we mourn

his death as that of a benefactor who loved and taught us.

9. Such a gift had Nature, in her bounty, bestowed on us
240 in Robert Burns; but with queenlike indifference she cast it from her hand, like a thing of no moment; and it was defaced and torn asunder, as an idle bauble, before we recognised it. To the ill-starred Burns was given the power of making man's life more venerable, but that of wisely guiding his own life was not given. Destiny,—for so in our ignorance we must speak,—his faults, the faults of others, proved too hard for him; and that spirit, which might have soared could it but have walked, soon sank to the dust, its glorious faculties trodden under foot in the blossom; and
245 died, we may almost say, without ever having lived. And so kind and warm a soul; so full of inborn riches, of love to all living and lifeless things! How his heart flows out in sympathy over universal Nature; and in her bleakest provinces discerns a beauty and a meaning! The "Daisy"
250 falls not unheeded under his ploughshare; nor the ruined nest of that "wee, cowering, timorous beastie," cast forth, after all its provident pains, to "thole the sleety dribble and cranreuch cauld." The "hoar visage" of Winter delights him; he dwells with a sad and oft-returning fondness in
255 these scenes of solemn desolation; but the voice of the tempest becomes an anthem to his ears; he loves to walk in the sounding woods, for "it raises his thoughts to *Him that walketh on the wings of the wind.*" A true Poet-soul, for it needs but to be struck, and the sound it yields will be music!
260 But observe him chiefly as he mingles with his brother men. What warm, all-comprehending fellow-feeling; what trustful, boundless love; what generous exaggeration of the object loved! His rustic friend, his nut-brown maiden, are no longer mean and homely, but a hero and a queen, whom he
265 prizes as the paragons of Earth. The rough scenes of Scottish life, not seen by him in any Arcadian illusion, but in the

rude contradiction, in the smoke and soil of a too harsh reality, are still lovely to him: Poverty is indeed his companion, but Love also, and Courage; the simple feelings, the 275 worth, the nobleness, that dwell under the straw roof, are dear and venerable to his heart: and thus over the lowest provinces of man's existence he pours the glory of his own soul; and they rise, in shadow and sunshine, softened and brightened into a beauty which other eyes discern not in 280 the highest. He has a just self-consciousness, which too often degenerates into pride; yet it is a noble pride, for defence, not for offence; no cold suspicious feeling, but a frank and social one. The Peasant Poet bears himself, we might say, like a King in exile: he is cast among the low, and 285 feels himself equal to the highest; yet he claims no rank, that none may be disputed to him. The forward he can repel, the supercilious he can subdue; pretensions of wealth or ancestry are of no avail with him; there is a fire in that dark eye, under which the "insolence of condescension" 290 cannot thrive. In his abasement, in his extreme need, he forgets not for a moment the majesty of Poetry and Manhood. And yet, far as he feels himself above common men, he wanders not apart from them, but mixes warmly in their interests; nay throws himself into their arms, and, as it 295 were, entreats them to love him. It is moving to see how, in his darkest despondency, this proud being still seeks relief from friendship; unbosoms himself, often to the unworthy; and, amid tears, strains to his glowing heart a heart that knows only the name of friendship. And yet he was 300 "quick to learn"; a man of keen vision, before whom common disguises afforded no concealment. His understanding saw through the hollowness even of accomplished deceivers; but there was a generous credulity in his heart. And so did our Peasant show himself among us; "a soul like an \mathcal{E} olian 305 harp, in whose strings the vulgar wind, as it passed through them, changed itself into articulate melody." And this was

he for whom the world found no fitter business than quarrelling with smugglers and vintners, computing excise-dues upon tallow, and gauging ale-barrels! In such toils was 310 that mighty Spirit sorrowfully wasted: and a hundred years may pass on, before another such is given us to waste.

315 *try 10.* All that remains of Burns, the Writings he has left, seem to us, as we hinted above, no more than a poor mutilated fraction of what was in him; brief, broken glimpses of a genius that could never show itself complete; that wanted all things for completeness: culture, leisure, true effort, nay even length of life. His poems are, with scarcely any exception, mere occasional effusions; poured forth with little premeditation; expressing, by such means as offered, 320 the passion, opinion, or humour of the hour. Never in one instance was it permitted him to grapple with any subject with the full collection of his strength, to fuse and mould it in the concentrated fire of his genius. To try by the strict rules of Art such imperfect fragments, would be at once 325 unprofitable and unfair. Nevertheless, there is something in these poems, marred and defective as they are, which forbids the most fastidious student of poetry to pass them by. Some sort of enduring quality they must have: for after 330 fifty years of the wildest vicissitudes in poetic taste, they still continue to be read; nay, are read more and more eagerly, more and more extensively; and this not only by literary virtuosos, and that class upon whom transitory causes operate most strongly, but by all classes, down to the most hard, unlettered and truly natural class, who read little, and 335 especially no poetry, except because they find pleasure in it. The grounds of so singular and wide a popularity, which extends, in a literal sense, from the palace to the hut, and over all regions where the English tongue is spoken, are well worth inquiring into. After every just deduction, it 340 seems to imply some rare excellence in these works. What is that excellence?

11. To answer this question will not lead us far. The excellence of Burns is, indeed, among the rarest, whether in poetry or prose; but, at the same time, it is plain and 345 easily recognised: his Sincerity, his indisputable air of Truth. Here are no fabulous woes or joys; no hollow fantastic sentimentalities; no wiredrawn refinings, either in thought or feeling. The passion that is traced before us has glowed in a living heart; the opinion he utters has risen in 350 his own understanding, and been a light to his own steps. He does not write from hearsay, but from sight and experience; it is the scenes that he has lived and laboured amidst, that he describes: those scenes, rude and humble as they are, have kindled beautiful emotions in his soul, noble 355 thoughts, and definite resolves; and he speaks forth what is in him, not from any outward call of vanity or interest, but because his heart is too full to be silent. He speaks it with such melody and modulation as he can; "in homely rustic jingle;" but it is his own, and genuine. This is the 360 grand secret for finding readers and retaining them: let him who would move and convince others, be first moved and convinced himself. Horace's rule, *Si vis me flere*, is applicable in a wider sense than the literal one. To every poet, to every writer, we might say: Be true, if you would 365 be believed. Let a man but speak forth with genuine earnestness the thought, the emotion, the actual condition of his own heart; and other men, so strangely are we all knit together by the tie of sympathy, must and will give heed to him. In culture, in extent of view, we may stand above 370 the speaker, or below him; but in either case, his words, if they are earnest and sincere, will find some response within us; for in spite of all casual varieties in outward rank or inward, as face answers to face, so does the heart of man to man.

375 12. This may appear a very simple principle, and one which Burns had little merit in discovering. True, the

discovery is easy enough: but the practical appliance is not easy; is indeed the fundamental difficulty which all poets have to strive with, and which scarcely one in the 380 hundred ever fairly surmounts. A head too dull to discriminate the true from the false; a heart too dull to love the one at all risks, and to hate the other in spite of all temptations, are alike fatal to a writer. With either, or, as more commonly happens, with both of these deficiencies combine 385 a love of distinction, a wish to be original, which is seldom wanting, and we have Affectation, the bane of literature, as Cant, its elder brother, is of morals. How often does the one and the other front us, in poetry, as in life! Great poets themselves are not always free of this vice; nay, it is 390 precisely on a certain sort and degree of greatness that it is most commonly ingrafted. A strong effort after excellence will sometimes solace itself with a mere shadow of success; he who has much to unfold, will sometimes unfold it imperfectly. Byron, for instance, was no common man: yet if 395 we examine his poetry with this view, we shall find it far enough from faultless. Generally speaking, we should say that it is not true. He refreshes us, not with the divine fountain, but too often with vulgar strong waters, stimulating indeed to the taste, but soon ending in dislike, or even 400 nausea. Are his Harolds and Giaours, we would ask, real men; we mean, poetically consistent and conceivable men? Do not these characters, does not the character of their author, which more or less shines through them all, rather appear a thing put on for the occasion; no natural or possi- 405 ble mode of being, but something intended to look much grander than nature? Surely, all these stormful agonies, this volcanic heroism, superhuman contempt and moody desperation, with so much scowling, and teeth-gnashing, and other sulphurous humour, is more like the brawling 410 of a player in some paltry tragedy, which is to last three hours, than the bearing of a man in the business of life,

which is to last threescore and ten years. To our minds there is a taint of this sort, something which we should call theatrical, false, affected, in every one of these otherwise so 415 powerful pieces. Perhaps *Don Juan*, especially the latter parts of it, is the only thing approaching to a *sincere* work, he ever wrote; the only work where he showed himself, in any measure, as he was; and seemed so intent on his subject as, for moments, to forget himself. Yet Byron hated this 420 vice; we believe, heartily detested it: nay he had declared formal war against it in words. So difficult is it even for the strongest to make this primary attainment, which might seem the simplest of all: to *read its own consciousness without mistakes*, without errors involuntary or wil- 425 ful! We recollect no poet of Burns's susceptibility who comes before us from the first, and abides with us to the last, with such a total want of affectation. He is an honest man, and an honest writer. In his successes and his failures, in his greatness and his littleness, he is ever clear, 430 simple, true, and glitters with no lustre but his own. We reckon this to be a great virtue; to be, in fact, the root of most other virtues, literary as well as moral.

13. Here, however, let us say, it is to the Poetry of Burns that we now allude; to those writings which he had 435 time to meditate, and where no special reason existed to warp his critical feeling, or obstruct his endeavour to fulfil it. Certain of his Letters, and other fractions of prose composition, by no means deserve this praise. Here doubtless, there is not the same natural truth of style; but on 440 the contrary, something not only stiff, but strained and twisted; a certain high-flown inflated tone; the stilting emphasis of which contrasts ill with the firmness and rugged simplicity of even his poorest verses. Thus no man, it would appear, is altogether unaffected. Does not Shak- 445 speare himself sometimes premeditate the sheerest bombast! But even with regard to these Letters of Burns, it is but

fair to state that he had two excuses. The first was his comparative deficiency in language. Burns, though for most part he writes with singular force and even gracefulness, is not master of English prose, as he is of Scottish verse; not master of it, we mean, in proportion to the depth and vehemence of his matter. These Letters strike us as the effort of a man to express something which he has no organ fit for expressing. But a second and weightier excuse is to be found in the peculiarity of Burns's social rank. His correspondents are often men whose relation to him he has never accurately ascertained; whom therefore he is either forearming himself against, or else unconsciously flattering, by adopting the style he thinks will please them. At all events we should remember that these faults, even in his Letters, are not the rule, but the exception. Whenever he writes, as one would ever wish to do, to trusted friends and on real interests, his style becomes simple, vigorous, expressive, sometimes even beautiful. His letters to Mrs. Dunlop are uniformly excellent.

14. But we return to his Poetry. In addition to its Sincerity, it has another peculiar merit, which indeed is but a mode, or perhaps a means, of the foregoing; this displays itself in his choice of subjects; or rather in his indifference as to subjects, and the power he has of making all subjects interesting. The ordinary poet, like the ordinary man, is forever seeking in external circumstances the help which can be found only in himself. In what is familiar and near at hand, he discerns no form of comeliness: home is not poetical but prosaic; it is in some past, distant, conventional heroic world, that poetry resides; were he there and not here, were he thus and not so, it would be well with him. Hence our innumerable host of rose-coloured Novels and iron-mailed Epics, with their locality not on the Earth, but somewhat nearer to the Moon. Hence our Virgins of the Sun, and our Knights of the Cross, mali-

cious Saracens in turbans, and copper-coloured Chiefs in wampum, and so many other truculent figures from the heroic times or the heroic climates, who on all hands swarm 485 in our poetry. Peace be with them! But yet, as a great moralist proposed preaching to the men of this century, so would we fain preach to the poets, "a sermon on the duty of staying at home." Let them be sure that heroic ages and heroic climates can do little for them. That form of 490 life has attraction for us, less because it is better or nobler than our own, than simply because it is different; and even this attraction must be of the most transient sort. For will not our own age, one day, be an ancient one; and have as quaint a costume as the rest; not contrasted 495 with the rest, therefore, but ranked along with them, in respect of quaintness? Does Homer interest us now, because he wrote of what passed beyond his native Greece, and two centuries before he was born; or because he wrote what passed in God's world, and in the heart of man, which 500 is the same after thirty centuries? Let our poets look to this: is their feeling really finer, truer, and their vision deeper than that of other men,—they have nothing to fear, even from the humblest subject; is it not so,—they have nothing to hope, but an ephemeral favour, even from the 505 highest.

15. The poet, we imagine, can never have far to seek for a subject: the elements of his art are in him, and around him on every hand; for him the Ideal world is not remote from the Actual, but under it and within it: nay, he is a 510 poet, precisely because he can discern it there. Wherever there is a sky above him, and a world around him, the poet is in his place; for here too is man's existence, with its infinite longings and small acquirings; its ever-thwarted, ever-renewed endeavours; its unspeakable aspirations, its 515 fears and hopes that wander through Eternity; and all the mystery of brightness and of gloom that it was ever made

of, in any age or climate, since man first began to live. Is there not the fifth act of a Tragedy in every death-bed, though it were a peasant's and a bed of heath? And are 520 wooings and weddings obsolete, that there can be Comedy no longer? Or are men suddenly grown wise, that Laughter must no longer shake his sides, but be cheated of his Farce? Man's life and nature is, as it was, and as it will ever be. But the poet must have an eye to read these 525 things, and a heart to understand them; or they come and pass away before him in vain. He is a *vates*, a seer; a gift of vision has been given him. Has life no meanings for him, which another cannot equally decipher; then he is no poet, and Delphi itself will not make him one.

530 16. In this respect, Burns, though not perhaps absolutely a great poet, better manifests his capability, better proves the truth of his genius, than if he had by his own strength kept the whole Minerva Press going, to the end of his literary course. He shows himself at least a poet of 535 Nature's own making; and Nature, after all, is still the grand agent in making poets. We often hear of this and the other external condition being requisite for the existence of a poet. Sometimes it is a certain sort of training; he must have studied certain things, studied for instance 540 "the elder dramatists," and so learned a poetic language; as if poetry lay in the tongue, not in the heart. At other times we are told he must be bred in a certain rank, and must be on a confidential footing with the higher classes; because, above all things, he must see the world. As to 545 seeing the world, we apprehend this will cause him little difficulty, if he have but eyesight to see it with. Without eyesight, indeed, the task might be hard. The blind or the purblind man "travels from Dan to Beersheba, and finds it all barren." But happily every poet is born in 550 the world; and sees it, with or against his will, every day and every hour he lives. The mysterious workmanship of

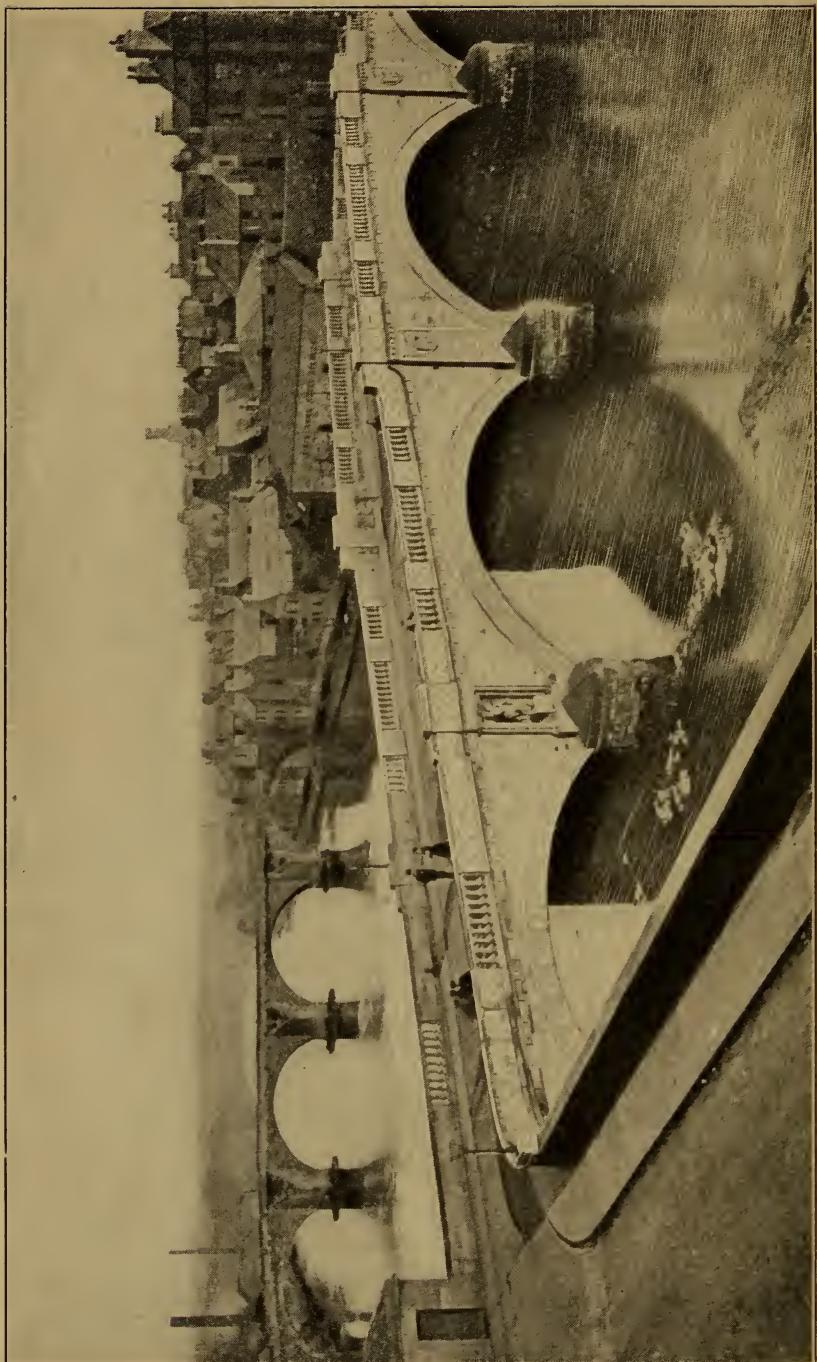
man's heart, the true light and the inscrutable darkness of man's destiny, reveal themselves not only in capital cities and crowded saloons, but in every hut and hamlet where men 555 have their abode. Nay, do not the elements of all human virtues and all human vices; the passions at once of a Borgia and of a Luther, lie written, in stronger or fainter lines, in the consciousness of every individual bosom, that has practised honest self-examination? Truly this same 560 world may be seen in Mossiel and Tarbolton, if we look well, as clearly as it ever came to light in Crockford's, or the Tuilleries itself.

17. But sometimes still harder requisitions are laid on the poor aspirant to poetry; for it is hinted that he should 565 have *been born* two centuries ago; inasmuch as poetry, about that date, vanished from the earth, and became no longer attainable by men! Such cobweb speculations have, now and then, overhung the field of literature; but they obstruct not the growth of any plant there: the Shakspeare 570 or the Burns, unconsciously and merely as he walks onward, silently brushes them away. Is not every genius an impossibility till he appear? Why do we call him new and original, if *we* saw where his marble was lying, and what fabric he could rear from it? It is not the material but the work- 575 man that is wanting. It is not the dark *place* that hinders, but the dim *eye*. A Scottish peasant's life was the meanest and rudest of all lives, till Burns became a poet in it, and a poet of it; found it a *man's* life, and therefore significant to men. A thousand battle-fields remain unsung; but the 580 *Wounded Hare* has not perished without its memorial; a balm of mercy yet breathes on us from its dumb agonies, because a poet was there. Our *Halloween* had passed and repassed, in rude awe and laughter, since the era of the Druids; but no Theocritus, till Burns, discerned in it the 585 materials of a Scottish Idyl: neither was the *Holy Fair* any *Council of Trent* or *Roman Jubilee*; but nevertheless, *Super-*

stition and *Hypocrisy* and *Fun* having been propitious to him, in this man's hand it became a poem, instinct with satire and genuine comic life. Let but the true poet be 590 given us, we repeat it, place him where and how you will, and true poetry will not be wanting.

18. Independently of the essential gift of poetic feeling, as we have now attempted to describe it, a certain rugged sterling worth pervades whatever Burns has written; a 595 virtue, as of green fields and mountain breezes, dwells in his poetry; it is redolent of natural life and hardy natural men. There is a decisive strength in him, and yet a sweet native gracefulness: he is tender, he is vehement, yet without constraint or too visible effort; he melts the heart, or 600 inflames it, with a power which seems habitual and familiar to him. We see that in this man there was the gentleness, the trembling pity of a woman, with the deep earnestness, the force and passionate ardour of a hero. Tears lie in him, and consuming fire; as lightning lurks in the drops 605 of the summer cloud. [He has a resonance in his bosom for every note of human feeling; the high and the low, the sad, the ludicrous, the joyful, are welcome in their turns to his "lightly-moved and all-conceiving spirit." And observe with what a fierce prompt force he grasps his subject, be 610 it what it may! How he fixes, as it were, the full image of the matter in his eye; full and clear in every lineament; and catches the real type and essence of it, amid a thousand accidents and superficial circumstances, no one of which misleads him! Is it of reason; some truth to be discov- 615 ered? [No sophistry, no vain surface-logic detains him; quick, resolute, unerring, he pierces through into the marrow of the question; and speaks his verdict with an emphasis that cannot be forgotten.] Is it of description; some visual object to be represented? [No poet of any age or 620 nation is more graphic than Burns: the characteristic features disclose themselves to him at a glance; three lines

THE TWA BRIGS.
From a photograph.



from his hand, and we have a likeness. And, in that rough dialect, in that rude, often awkward metre, so clear and definite a likeness! It seems a draughtsman working with 625 a burnt stick; and yet the burin of a Retzsch is not more expressive or exact.

19. Of this last excellence, the plainest and most comprehensive of all, being indeed the root and foundation of *every* sort of talent, poetical or intellectual, we could 630 produce innumerable instances from the writings of Burns. Take these glimpses of a snow-storm from his *Winter Night* (the italics are ours);

635 When biting Boreas, fell and doure,
 Sharp shivers thro' the leafless bow'r,
 And Phœbus *gies a short-liv'd glowr*
 Far south the lift,
 Dim dark'ning thro' the *flaky show'r*
 Or whirling drift:

640 'Ae night the storm the steeples rock'd,
 Poor labour sweet in sleep was lock'd,
 While burns *wi' snawy wreaths upchok'd*
 Wild-eddying swirl,
 Or thro' the mining outlet bock'd,
 Down headlong hurl.

645 Are there not "descriptive touches" here? The describer *saw* this thing; the essential feature and true likeness of every circumstance in it; *saw*, and not with the eye only. "Poor labour locked in sweet sleep;" the dead stillness of man, unconscious, vanquished, yet not unprotected, while 650 such strife of the material elements rages, and seems to reign supreme in loneliness: this is of the heart as well as of the eye!—Look also at his image of a thaw, and prophesied fall of the *Auld Brig*:

655 When heavy, dark, continued, a'-day rains
 Wi' deepening deluges o'erflow the plains;
 When from the hills where springs the brawling Coil,
 Or stately Lugar's *mossy fountains boil*,

660 Or where the Greenock winds his *moorland* course,
 Or haunted Garpal¹ draws his feeble source,
 Arous'd by blust'ring winds and *spotting* thowes,
 In mony a torrent down his snaw-broo rowes;
 While crashing ice, borne on the roaring speat,
 Sweeps dams and mills and brigs a' to the gate;
 And from Glenbuck down to the Rottonkey,
 665 Auld Ayr is just one lengthen'd *tumbling* sea;
 Then down ye'll hurl, Deil nor ye never rise!
 And *dash the gumlie jaups up to the pouring skies.*

The last line is in itself a Poussin-picture of that Deluge ! The welkin has, as it were, bent down with its weight ; the 670 "gumlie jaups" and the "pouring skies" are mingled together ; it is a world of rain and ruin. — In respect of mere clearness and minute fidelity, the *Farmer's* commendation of his *Auld Mare* in plough or in cart, may vie with Homer's Smithy of the Cyclops, or yoking of Priam's 675 Chariot. Nor have we forgotten stout *Burn-the-wind* and his brawny customers, inspired by *Scotch Drink* : but it is needless to multiply examples. One other trait of a much finer sort we select from multitudes of such among his *Songs*. It gives, in a single line, to the sad- 680 dest feeling the saddest environment and local habitation :

The pale Moon is setting beyond the white wave,
And Time is setting wi' me, O;
Farewell, false friends ! false lover, farewell !
I'll nae mair trouble them nor thee, O.

685 20. This clearness of sight we have called the foundation of all talent ; for in fact, unless we *see* our object, how shall we know how to place or prize it, in our understanding, our imagination, our affections ? Yet it is not in itself, perhaps, a very high excellence ; but capable of being united 690 indifferently with the strongest, or with ordinary power.

Homer surpasses all men in this quality : but strangely enough, at no great distance below him are Richardson and

¹ *Fabulosus Hydaspes ! — Carlyle's note.*

Defoe. It belongs, in truth, to what is called a lively mind ; and gives no sure indication of the higher endowments that 695 may exist along with it. In all the three cases we have mentioned, it is combined with great garrulity ; their descriptions are detailed, ample and lovingly exact ; Homer's fire bursts through, from time to time, as if by accident ; but Defoe and Richardson have no fire. Burns, again, is 700 not more distinguished by the clearness than by the impetuous force of his conceptions. Of the strength, the piercing emphasis with which he thought, his emphasis of expression may give a humble but the readiest proof. Who ever uttered sharper sayings than his ; words more memorable, 705 now by their burning vehemence, now by their cool vigour and laconic pith ? A single phrase depicts a whole subject, a whole scene. We hear of "a gentleman that derived his patent of nobility direct from Almighty God." Our Scottish forefathers in the battle-field struggled forward "*red-710 wat-shod* :" in this one word, a full vision of horror and carnage, perhaps too frightfully accurate for Art !

21. In fact, one of the leading features in the mind of Burns is this vigour of his strictly intellectual perceptions. A resolute force is ever visible in his judgments, 715 and in his feelings and volitions. Professor Stewart says of him, with some surprise : "All the faculties of Burns's mind were, as far as I could judge, equally vigorous ; and his predilection for poetry was rather the result of his own enthusiastic and impassioned temper, than of 720 a genius exclusively adapted to that species of composition. From his conversation I should have pronounced him to be fitted to excel in whatever walk of ambition he had chosen to exert his abilities." But this, if we mistake not, is at all times the very essence of a truly poetical endowment. Poetry, except in such cases as that of Keats, where 725 the whole consists in a weak-eyed maudlin sensibility, and a certain vague random tunefulness of nature, is no separate

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faculty, no organ which can be superadded to the rest, or disjoined from them; but rather the result of their general
730 harmony and completion. The feelings, the gifts that exist in the Poet are those that exist, with more or less development, in every human soul: the imagination, which shudders at the Hell of Dante, is the same faculty, weaker in degree, which called that picture into being. How does
735 the Poet speak to men, with power, but by being still more a man than they? Shakspeare, it has been well observed, in the planning and completing of his tragedies, has shown an Understanding, were it nothing more, which might have governed states, or indited a *Novum Organum*. What
740 Burns's force of understanding may have been, we have less means of judging: it had to dwell among the humblest objects; never saw Philosophy; never rose, except by natural effort and for short intervals, into the region of great ideas. Nevertheless, sufficient indication, if no proof suffi-
745 cient, remains for us in his works: we discern the brawny movements of a gigantic though untutored strength; and can understand how, in conversation, his quick sure insight into men and things may, as much as aught else about him, have amazed the best thinkers of his time and country.

7 750 22. But, unless we mistake, the intellectual gift of Burns is fine as well as strong. The more delicate relations of things could not well have escaped his eye, for they were intimately present to his heart. The logic of the senate and the forum is indispensable, but not all-sufficient; nay
755 perhaps the highest Truth is that which will the most certainly elude it. For this logic works by words, and "the highest," it has been said, "cannot be expressed in words." We are not without tokens of an openness for this higher truth also, of a keen though uncultivated sense for it, having existed in Burns. Mr. Stewart, it will be remembered, "wonders," in the passage above quoted, that Burns had formed some distinct conception of the "doctrine of associ-

ation." We rather think that far subtler things than the doctrine of association had from of old been familiar to him.
765 Here for instance :

23. "We know nothing," thus writes he, "or next to nothing, of the structure of our souls, so we cannot account for those seeming caprices in them, that one should be particularly pleased with this thing, or struck with that, which, on minds of a different cast, makes 770 no extraordinary impression. I have some favourite flowers in spring, among which are the mountain-daisy, the harebell, the foxglove, the wild-brier rose, the budding birch, and the hoary hawthorn, that I view and hang over with particular delight. I never hear the loud solitary whistle of the curlew in a summer noon, or the wild mixing 775 cadence of a troop of gray plover in an autumnal morning, without feeling an elevation of soul like the enthusiasm of devotion or poetry. Tell me, my dear friend, to what can this be owing? Are we a piece of machinery, which, like the *Æolian* harp, passive, takes the impression of the passing accident; or do these workings argue something 780 within us above the trodden clod? I own myself partial to such proofs of those awful and important realities: a God that made all things, man's immaterial and immortal nature, and a world of weal or wo beyond death and the grave."

24. Force and fineness of understanding are often spoken 785 of as something different from general force and fineness of nature, as something partly independent of them. The necessities of language so require it; but in truth these qualities are not distinct and independent: except in special cases, and from special causes, they ever go together.
790 A man of strong understanding is generally a man of strong character; neither is delicacy in the one kind often divided from delicacy in the other. No one, at all events, is ignorant that in the Poetry of Burns keenness of insight keeps pace with keenness of feeling; that his *light* is not 795 more pervading than his *warmth*. He is a man of the most impassioned temper; with passions not strong only, but noble, and of the sort in which great virtues and great poems take their rise. It is reverence, it is love towards

all Nature that inspires him, that opens his eyes to its
800 beauty, and makes heart and voice eloquent in its praise. There is a true old saying, that "Love furthers knowledge:" but above all, it is the living essence of that knowledge which makes poets; the first principle of its existence, increase, activity. Of Burns's fervid affection, his generous all-embracing Love, we have spoken already, as of the grand distinction of his nature, seen equally in word and deed, in his Life and in his Writings. It were easy to multiply examples. Not man only, but all that environs man in the material and moral universe, is lovely in his
810 sight: "the hoary hawthorn," the "troop of gray plover," the "solitary curlew," all are dear to him; all live in this Earth along with him, and to all he is knit as in mysterious brotherhood. How touching is it, for instance, that, amidst the gloom of personal misery, brooding over the wintry
815 desolation without him and within him, he thinks of the "ourie cattle" and "silly sheep," and their sufferings in the pitiless storm!

I thought me on the ourie cattle,
Or silly sheep, wha bide this brattle
 O' wintry war,
Or thro' the drift, deep-lairing, sprattle,
 Beneath a scaur.
Ilk happing bird, wee helpless thing,
That in the merry months o' spring
Delighted me to hear thee sing,
 What comes o' thee ?
Where wilt thou cow'r thy chittering wing,
 And close thy ee ?

The tenant of the mean hut, with its "ragged roof and
830 chinky wall," has a heart to pity even these! This is
worth several homilies on Mercy; for it is the voice of
Mercy herself. Burns, indeed, lives in sympathy; his soul
rushes forth into all realms of being; nothing that has

existence can be indifferent to him. The very Devil he
835 cannot hate with right orthodoxy :

But fare you weel, auld Nickie-ben ;
O, wad ye tak a thought and men' !
Ye aiblins might, — I dinna ken, —
Still hae a stake ;
I'm wae to think upo' yon den,
Even for your sake !

840

“ *He* is the father of curses and lies,” said Dr. Slop ; “ and is cursed and damned already.” — “ I am’ sorry for it,” quoth my uncle Toby ! — a Poet without Love were a
845 physical and metaphysical impossibility.

25. But has not it been said, in contradiction to this principle, that “ Indignation makes verses ” ? It has been so said, and is true enough: but the contradiction is apparent, not real. The Indignation which makes verses is, properly speaking, an inverted Love ; the love of some right, some worth, some goodness, belonging to ourselves or others, which has been injured, and which this tempestuous feeling issues forth to defend and avenge. No selfish fury of heart, existing there as a primary feeling, and without its opposite,
855 ever produced much Poetry: otherwise, we suppose, the Tiger were the most musical of all our choristers. Johnson said, he loved a good hater; by which he must have meant, not so much one that hated violently, as one that hated wisely; hated baseness from love of nobleness. However,
860 in spite of Johnson’s paradox, tolerable enough for once in speech, but which need not have been so often adopted in print since then, we rather believe that good men deal sparingly in hatred, either wise or unwise: nay that a “ good ” hater is still a desideratum in this world. The
865 Devil, at least, who passes for the chief and best of that class, is said to be nowise an amiable character.

26. Of the verses which Indignation makes, Burns has also given us specimens: and among the best that were

ever given. Who will forget his *Dweller in yon Dungeon*
 870 *dark*; a piece that might have been chanted by the Furies
 of *Æschylus*? The secrets of the Infernal Pit are laid
 bare; a boundless baleful “darkness visible;” and streaks
 of hell-fire quivering madly in its black haggard bosom!

875

Dweller in yon Dungeon dark,
 Hangman of Creation, mark !
 Who in widow's weeds appears,
 Laden with unhonoured years,
 Noosing with care a bursting purse,
 Baited with many a deadly curse !

880 27. Why should we speak of *Scots wha hae wi' Wallace*
bled; since all know of it, from the king to the meanest
 of his subjects? This dithyrambic was composed on horse-
 back; in riding in the middle of tempests, over the wildest
 Galloway moor, in company with a Mr. Syme, who, observ-
 885 ing the poet's looks, forbore to speak,—judiciously enough,
 for a man composing *Bruce's Address* might be unsafe to
 trifle with. Doubtless this stern hymn was singing itself,
 as he formed it, through the soul of Burns: but to the
 external ear, it should be sung with the throat of the whirl-
 890 wind. So long as there is warm blood in the heart of
 Scotchman or man, it will move in fierce thrills under this
 war-ode; the best, we believe, that was ever written by any
 pen.

28. Another wild stormful Song, that dwells in our ear
 895 and mind with a strange tenacity, is *Macpherson's Fare-
 well*. Perhaps there is something in the tradition itself
 that coöperates. For was not this grim Celt, this shaggy
 Northland Cacus, that “lived a life of sturt and strife, and
 died by treacherie,”—was not he too one of the Nimrods
 900 and Napoleons of the earth, in the arena of his own remote
 misty glens, for want of a clearer and wider one? Nay,
 was there not a touch of grace given him? A fibre of love
 and softness, of poetry itself, must have lived in his savage

heart: for he composed that air the night before his execution; on the wings of that poor melody his better soul would soar away above oblivion, pain, and all the ignominy and despair, which, like an avalanche, was hurling him to the abyss! Here also, as at Thebes, and in Pelops' line, was material Fate matched against man's Free-will; matched in bitterest though obscure duel; and the ethereal soul sank not, even in its blindness, without a cry which has survived it. But who, except Burns, could have given words to such a soul; words that we never listen to without a strange half-barbarous, half-poetic fellow-feeling?

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*Sae rantingly, sae wantonly,
Sae dauntingly gaed he;
He play'd a spring, and danced it round,
Below the gallows-tree.*

29. Under a lighter disguise, the same principle of Love, which we have recognized as the great characteristic of Burns, and of all true poets, occasionally manifests itself in the shape of Humour. Everywhere, indeed, in his sunny moods, a full buoyant flood of mirth rolls through the mind of Burns; he rises to the high, and stoops to the low, and is brother and playmate to all Nature. We speak not of his bold and often irresistible faculty of caricature; for this is Drollery rather than Humour: but a much tenderer sportfulness dwells in him; and comes forth here and there, in evanescent and beautiful touches; as in his *Address to the Mouse*, or the *Farmer's Mare*, or in his *Elegy on poor Mailie*, which last may be reckoned his happiest effort of this kind. In these pieces there are traits of a Humour as fine as that of Sterne; yet altogether different, original, peculiar,—the Humour of Burns.

935 30. Of the tenderness, the playful pathos, and many other kindred qualities of Burns's Poetry, much more might be said; but now, with these poor outlines of a sketch, we must prepare to quit this part of our subject. To speak of

his individual Writings, adequately and with any detail, 940 would lead us far beyond our limits. As already hinted, we can look on but few of these pieces as, in strict critical language, deserving the name of Poems: they are rhymed eloquence, rhymed pathos, rhymed sense; yet seldom essentially melodious, aerial, poetical. *Tam o' Shanter* itself, 945 which enjoys so high a favour, does not appear to us at all decisively to come under this last category. It is not so much a poem, as a piece of sparkling rhetoric; the heart and body of the story still lies hard and dead. He has not gone back, much less carried us back, into that dark, earnest, 950 wondering age, when the tradition was believed, and when it took its rise; he does not attempt, by any new-modelling of his supernatural ware, to strike anew that deep mysterious chord of human nature, which once responded to such things; and which lives in us too, and will forever live, 955 though silent now, or vibrating with far other notes, and to far different issues. Our German readers will understand us, when we say, that he is not the Tieck but the Musäus of this tale. Externally it is all green and living; yet look closer, it is no firm growth, but only ivy on a rock. The 960 piece does not properly cohere: the strange chasm which yawns in our incredulous imaginations between the Ayr public-house and the gate of Tophet, is nowhere bridged over, nay the idea of such a bridge is laughed at; and thus the Tragedy of the adventure becomes a mere drunken 965 phantasmagoria, or many-coloured spectrum painted on ale-vapours, and the Farce alone has any reality. We do not say that Burns should have made much more of this tradition; we rather think that, for strictly poetical purposes, not much *was* to be made of it. Neither are we blind to 970 the deep, varied, genial power displayed in what he has actually accomplished; but we find far more "Shakspearian" qualities, as these of *Tam o' Shanter* have been fondly named, in many of his other pieces; nay we incline

to believe that this latter might have been written, all but
975 quite as well, by a man who in place of genius, had only
possessed talent.

31. Perhaps we may venture to say, that the most strictly
poetical of all his "poems" is one which does not appear
in Currie's Edition; but has been often printed before
980 and since, under the humble title of *The Jolly Beggars*.

The subject truly is among the lowest in nature; but it
only the more shows our Poet's gift in raising it into the
domain of Art. To our minds, this piece seems thoroughly
985 compacted; melted together, refined; and poured forth in
one flood of true *liquid* harmony. It is light, airy, soft of
movement; yet sharp and precise in its details; every face
is a portrait: that *raucle carlin*, that *wee Apollo*, that
Son of Mars are Scottish, yet ideal; the scene is at once
a dream, and the very Ragcastle of "Poosie-Nansie." Far-
990 ther, it seems in a considerable degree complete, a real self-
supporting Whole, which is the highest merit in a poem.
The blanket of the Night is drawn asunder for a moment;
in full, ruddy, flaming light, these rough tatterdemalions
are seen in their boisterous revel; for the strong pulse of
995 Life vindicates its right to gladness even here; and when
the curtain closes, we prolong the action, without effort;
the next day as the last, our *Caird* and our *Balladmonger*
are singing and soldiering; their "brats and calleets"
are hawking, begging, cheating; and some other night, in
1000 new combinations, they will wring from Fate another hour
of wassail and good cheer. Apart from the universal sym-
pathy with man which this again bespeaks in Burns, a
genuine inspiration and no inconsiderable technical talent
are manifested here. There is the fidelity, humour, warm
1005 life and accurate painting and grouping of some Teniers,
for whom hostlers and carousing peasants are not without
significance. It would be strange, doubtless, to call this
the best of Burns's writings: we mean to say only, that it

seems to us the most perfect of its kind, as a piece of poetical composition, strictly so called. In the *Beggars' Opera*, in the *Beggars' Bush* as other critics have already remarked, there is nothing which, in real poetic vigour, equals this *Cantata*; nothing, as we think, which comes within many degrees of it.

1015 32. But by far the most finished, complete and truly inspired pieces of Burns are, without dispute, to be found among his *Songs*. It is here that, although through a small aperture, his light shines with least obstruction; in its highest beauty and pure sunny clearness. The reason 1020 may be, that Song is a brief simple species of composition; and requires nothing so much for its perfection as genuine poetic feeling, genuine music of heart. Yet the Song has its rules equally with the Tragedy; rules which in most cases are poorly fulfilled, in many cases are not so much as 1025 felt. We might write a long essay on the Songs of Burns; which we reckon by far the best that Britain has yet produced: for indeed, since the era of Queen Elizabeth, we know not that, by any other hand, aught truly worth attention has been accomplished in this department. True, we 1030 have songs enough "by persons of quality;" we have tawdry, hollow, wine-bred madrigals; many a rhymed speech "in the flowing and watery vein of Ossorius the Portugal Bishop," rich in sonorous words, and, for moral, dashed perhaps with some tint of a sentimental sensuality; all which 1035 many persons cease not from endeavouring to sing; though for most part, we fear, the music is but from the throat outwards, or at best from some region far enough short of the *Soul*; not in which, but in a certain inane Limbo of the Fancy, or even in some vaporous debatable-land on the 1040 outskirts of the Nervous System, most of such madrigals and rhymed speeches seem to have originated.

33. With the Songs of Burns we must not name these

things. Independently of the clear, manly, heartfelt sentiment that ever pervades *his* poetry, his Songs are honest 1045 in another point of view: in form, as well as in spirit.

• They do not *affect* to be set to music, but they actually and in themselves are music; they have received their life, and fashioned themselves together, in the medium of Harmony, as Venus rose from the bosom of the sea. The 1050 story, the feeling, is not detailed, but suggested; not *said*, or spouted, in rhetorical completeness and coherence; but *sung*, in fitful gushes, in glowing hints, in fantastic breaks, in *warblings* not of the voice only, but of the whole mind.

We consider this to be the essence of a song; and that no 1055 songs since the little careless catches, and as it were drops of song, which Shakspeare has here and there sprinkled over his Plays, fulfil this condition in nearly the same degree as most of Burns's do. Such grace and truth of external movement, too, presupposes in general a corre-1060 sponding force and truth of sentiment and inward meaning. The Songs of Burns are not more perfect in the former quality than in the latter. With what tenderness he sings, yet with what vehemence and entireness! There is a piercing wail in his sorrow, the purest rapture in his

1065 joy; he burns with the sternest ire, or laughs with the loudest or sliest mirth; and yet he is sweet and soft, "sweet as the smile when fond lovers meet, and soft as their parting tear." If we farther take into account the immense variety of his subjects; how, from the loud flow-1070 ing revel in *Willie brew'd a Peck o' Maut*, to the still, rapt enthusiasm of sadness for *Mary in Heaven*; from the glad kind greeting of *Auld Langsyne*, or the comic archness of *Duncan Gray*, to the fire-eyed fury of *Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled*, he has found a tone and words for

1075 every mood of man's heart,—it will seem a small praise if we rank him as the first of all our Song-writers; for we know not where to find one worthy of being second to him.

34. It is on his Songs, as we believe, that Burns's chief influence as an author will ultimately be found to depend: 1080 nor, if our Fletcher's aphorism is true, shall we account this a small influence. "Let me make the songs of a people," said he, "and you shall make its laws." Surely, if ever any Poet might have equalled himself with Legislators on this ground, it was Burns. His Songs are already 1085 part of the mother-tongue, not of Scotland only but of Britain, and of the millions that in all ends of the earth speak a British language. In hut and hall, as the heart unfolds itself in many-coloured joy and woe of existence, the *name*, the *voice* of that joy and that woe, is the name 1090 and voice which Burns has given them. Strictly speaking, perhaps no British man has so deeply affected the thoughts and feelings of so many men, as this solitary and altogether private individual, with means apparently the humblest.

35. In another point of view, moreover, we incline to 1095 think that Burns's influence may have been considerable: we mean, as exerted specially on the Literature of his country, at least on the Literature of Scotland. Among the great changes which British, particularly Scottish literature, has undergone since that period, one of the greatest will be 1100 found to consist in its remarkable increase of nationality. Even the English writers, most popular in Burns's time, were little distinguished for their literary patriotism, in this its best sense. A certain attenuated cosmopolitanism had, in good measure, taken place of the old insular home-feeling; literature was, as it were, without any local environment; was not nourished by the affections which spring from a native soil. Our Grays and Glovers seemed to write almost as if *in vacuo*; the thing written bears no mark of place; it is not written so much for Englishmen, as for 1110 men; or rather, which is the inevitable result of this, for certain Generalisations which philosophy termed men. Goldsmith is an exception; not so Johnson; the scene of

his *Rambler* is little more English than that of his *Rasselias*.

1115 36. But if such was, in some degree, the case with England, it was, in the highest degree, the case with Scotland. In fact, our Scottish literature had, at that period, a very singular aspect; unexampled, so far as we know, except perhaps at Geneva, where the same state of matters appears 1120 still to continue. For a long period after Scotland became British, we had no literature: at the date when Addison and Steele were writing their *Spectators*, our good John Boston was writing, with the noblest intent, but alike in defiance of grammar and philosophy, his *Fourfold State of Man*.
1125 Then came the schisms in our National Church, and the fiercer schisms in our Body Politic; Theologic ink, and Jacobite blood, with gall enough in both cases, seemed to have blotted out the intellect of the country: however, it was only obscured, not obliterated. Lord Kames made 1130 nearly the first attempt at writing English; and ere long, Hume, Robertson, Smith, and a whole host of followers, attracted hither the eyes of all Europe. And yet in this brilliant resuscitation of our "fervid genius," there was nothing truly Scottish, nothing indigenous; except, perhaps, 1135 the natural impetuosity of intellect, which we sometimes claim, and are sometimes upbraided with, as a characteristic of our nation. It is curious to remark that Scotland, so full of writers, had no Scottish culture, nor indeed any English; our culture was almost exclusively 1140 French. It was by studying Racine and Voltaire, Batteux and Boileau, that Kames had trained himself to be a critic and philosopher; it was the light of Montesquieu and Mably that guided Robertson in his political speculations; Quesnay's lamp that kindled the lamp of Adam Smith.
1145 Hume was too rich a man to borrow; and perhaps he reacted on the French more than he was acted on by them: but neither had he aught to do with Scotland; Edinburgh,

equally with La Flèche, was but the lodging and laboratory, in which he not so much morally *lived*, as metaphysically 1150 *investigated*. Never, perhaps, was there a class of writers so clear and well-ordered, yet so totally destitute, to all appearance, of any patriotic affection, nay of any human affection whatever. The French wits of the period were as unpatriotic: but their general deficiency in moral principle, 1155 not to say their avowed sensuality and unbelief in all virtue, strictly so called, render this accountable enough. We hope, there is a patriotism founded on something better than prejudice; that our country may be dear to us, without injury to our philosophy; that in loving and justly 1160 prizes all other lands, we may prize justly, and yet love before all others, our own stern Motherland, and the venerable Structure of social and moral Life, which Mind has through long ages been building up for us there.] Surely there is nourishment for the better part of man's heart in all 1165 this: surely the roots, that have fixed themselves in the very core of man's being, may be so cultivated as to grow up not into briars, but into roses, in the field of his life! Our Scottish sages have no such propensities: the field of their life shows neither briars nor roses; but only a flat, continuous 1170 thrashing-floor for Logic, whereon all questions, from the "Doctrine of Rent" to the "Natural History of Religion," are thrashed and sifted with the same mechanical impartiality!

37. With Sir Walter Scott at the head of our literature, it cannot be denied that much of this evil is past, or rapidly 1175 passing away: our chief literary men, whatever other faults they may have, no longer live among us like a French Colony, or some knot of Propaganda Missionaries; but like natural-born subjects of the soil, partaking and sympathising in all our attachments, humours and habits. Our literature 1180 no longer grows in water but in mould, and with the true racy virtues of the soil and climate. How much of this change may be due to Burns, or to any other individual, it

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might be difficult to estimate. Direct literary imitation of Burns was not to be looked for. But his example, in the 1185 fearless adoption of domestic subjects, could not but operate from afar; and certainly in no heart did the love of country ever burn with a warmer glow than in that of Burns: "a tide of Scottish prejudice," as he modestly calls this deep and generous feeling, "had been poured along his veins; 1190 and he felt that it would boil there till the flood-gates shut in eternal rest." It seemed to him, as if *he* could do so little for his country, and yet would so gladly have done all. One small province stood open for him,—that of Scottish Song; and how eagerly he entered on it, how 1195 devotedly he laboured there! In his toilsome journeyings, this object never quits him; it is the little happy-valley of his careworn heart. In the gloom of his own affliction, he eagerly searches after some lonely brother of the muse, and rejoices to snatch one other name from the oblivion that 1200 was covering it! These were early feelings, and they abode with him to the end:

1205 . . . A wish (I mind its power),
A wish, that to my latest hour
Will strongly heave my breast,—
That I, for poor auld Scotland's sake,
Some useful plan or book could make,
Or sing a sang at least.

1210 The rough bur Thistle spreading wide
Amang the bearded bear,
I turn'd my weeding-clips aside,
And spared the symbol dear.

✓ 38. But to leave the mere literary character of Burns, which has already detained us too long. Far more interesting than any of his written works, as it appears to us, 1215 are his acted ones: the Life he willed and was fated to lead among his fellow-men. These Poems are but like little rhymed fragments scattered here and there in the grand

unrhymed Romance of his earthly existence ; and it is only when intercalated in this at their proper places, that they
1220 attain their full measure of significance. And this, too, alas, was but a fragment ! The plan of a mighty edifice had been sketched ; some columns, porticos, firm masses of building, stand completed ; the rest more or less clearly indicated ; with many a far-stretching tendency, which only
1225 studious and friendly eyes can now trace towards the purposed termination. For the work is broken off in the middle, almost in the beginning ; and rises among us, beautiful and sad, at once unfinished and a ruin ! If charitable judgment was necessary in estimating his Poems, and justice required
1230 that the aim and the manifest power to fulfil it must often be accepted for the fulfilment ; much more is this the case in regard to his Life, the sum and result of all his endeavours, where his difficulties came upon him not in detail only, but in mass ; and so much has been left unaccomplished, nay
1235 was mistaken, and altogether marred.

39. Properly speaking, there is but one era in the life of Burns, and that the earliest. We have not youth and manhood, but only youth : for, to the end, we discern no decisive change in the complexion of his character ; in his
1240 thirty-seventh year, he is still, as it were, in youth. With all that resoluteness of judgment, that penetrating insight, and singular maturity of intellectual power, exhibited in his writings, he never attains to any clearness regarding himself ; to the last, he never ascertains his peculiar aim, even
1245 with such distinctness as is common among ordinary men ; and therefore never can pursue it with that singleness of will, which insures success and some contentment to such men. To the last, he wavers between two purposes : glorying in his talent, like a true poet, he yet cannot consent to
1250 make this his chief and sole glory, and to follow it as the one thing needful, through poverty or riches, through good or evil report. Another far meaner ambition still cleaves to

him; he must dream and struggle about a certain "Rock of Independence;" which, natural and even admirable as it 1255 might be, was still but a warring with the world, on the comparatively insignificant ground of his being more completely or less completely supplied with money than others; of his standing at a higher or at a lower altitude in general estimation than others. For the world still appears to him, 1260 as to the young, in borrowed colours: he expects from it what it cannot give to any man; seeks for contentment, not within himself, in action and wise effort, but from without, in the kindness of circumstances, in love, friendship, honour, pecuniary ease. He would be happy, not actively and in 1265 himself, but passively and from some ideal cornucopia of Enjoyments, not earned by his own labour, but showered on him by the beneficence of Destiny. Thus, like a young man, he cannot gird himself up for any worthy well-calculated goal, but swerves to and fro, between passionate hope 1270 and remorseful disappointment: rushing onwards with a deep tempestuous force; he surmounts or breaks asunder many a barrier; travels, nay advances far, but advancing only under uncertain guidance, is ever and anon turned from his path; and to the last cannot reach the only true 1275 happiness of a man, that of clear decided Activity in the sphere for which, by nature and circumstances, he has been fitted and appointed.

40. We do not say these things in dispraise of Burns; nay, perhaps, they but interest us the more in his favour. 1280 This blessing is not given soonest to the best; but rather, it is often the greatest minds that are latest in obtaining it; for where most is to be developed, most time may be required to develop it. A complex condition had been assigned him from without; as complex a condition from 1285 within: no "pre-established harmony" existed between the clay soil of Mossiel and the empyrean soul of Robert Burns; it was not wonderful that the adjustment between

them should have been long postponed, and his arm long cumbered, and his sight confused, in so vast and discordant an economy as he had been appointed steward over.

1290 Byron was, at his death, but a year younger than Burns; and through life, as it might have appeared, far more simply situated: yet in him too we can trace no such adjustment, no such moral manhood; but at best, and only 1295 a little before his end, the beginning of what seemed such.

41. By much the most striking incident in Burns's Life is his journey to Edinburgh; but perhaps a still more important one is his residence at Irvine, so early as in his twenty-third year. Hitherto his life had been poor 1300 and toilworn; but otherwise not ungenial, and, with all its distresses, by no means unhappy. In his parentage, deducting outward circumstances, he had every reason to reckon himself fortunate. His father was a man of thoughtful, intense, earnest character, as the best of our peasants 1305 are; valuing knowledge, possessing some, and what is far better and rarer, openminded for more: a man with a keen insight and devout heart; reverent towards God, friendly therefore at once, and fearless towards all that God has made: in one word, though but a hard-handed peasant, a 1310 complete and fully unfolded *Man*. Such a father is seldom found in any rank in society; and was worth descending far in society to seek. Unfortunately, he was very poor; had he been even a little richer, almost never so little, the whole might have issued far otherwise. Mighty events 1315 turn on a straw; the crossing of a brook decides the conquest of the world. Had this William Burns's small seven acres of nursery-ground anywise prospered, the boy Robert had been sent to school; had struggled forward, as so many weaker men do, to some university; come forth not as a 1320 rustic wonder, but as a regular well-trained intellectual workman, and changed the whole course of British Literature,—for it lay in him to have done this! But the nurs-

ery did not prosper; poverty sank his whole family below the help of even our cheap school-system: Burns remained 1325 a hard-worked ploughboy, and British literature took its own course. Nevertheless, even in this rugged scene there is much to nourish him. If he drudges, it is with his brother, and for his father and mother, whom he loves, and would fain shield from want. Wisdom is not banished from their 1330 poor hearth, nor the balm of natural feeling: the solemn words, *Let us worship God*, are heard there from a "priest-like father;" if threatenings of unjust men throw mother and children into tears, these are tears not of grief only, but of holiest affection; every heart in that humble group 1335 feels itself the closer knit to every other; in their hard warfare they are there together, a "little band of brethren." Neither are such tears, and the deep beauty that dwells in them, their only portion. Light visits the hearts as it does the eyes of all living: there is a force, too, in this youth, 1340 that enables him to trample on misfortune; nay, to bind it under his feet to make him sport. For a bold, warm, buoyant humour of character has been given him; and so the thick-coming shapes of evil are welcomed with a gay, friendly irony, and in their closest pressure he bates no 1345 jot of heart or hope. Vague yearnings of ambition fail not, as he grows up; dreamy fancies hang like cloud-cities around him; the curtain of Existence is slowly rising, in many-coloured splendour and gloom: and the auroral light of first love is gilding his horizon, and the music of song is 1350 on his path; and so he walks

. in glory and in joy,
Behind his plough, upon the mountain side.

42. We ourselves know, from the best evidence, that up to this date Burns was happy; nay that he was the gayest, 1355 brightest, most fantastic, fascinating being to be found in the world; more so even than he ever afterwards appeared.

But now, at this early age, he quits the paternal roof; goes forth into looser, louder, more exciting society; and becomes initiated in those dissipations, those vices, which a 1360 certain class of philosophers have asserted to be a natural preparative for entering an active life; a kind of mud-bath, in which the youth is, as it were, necessitated to steep, and, we suppose, cleanse himself, before the real toga of Manhood can be laid on him. We shall not dispute much with 1365 this class of philosophers; we hope they are mistaken: for Sin and Remorse so easily beset us at all stages of life, and are always such indifferent company, that it seems hard we should, at any stage, be forced and fated not only to meet but to yield to them, and even serve for a term in their 1370 leprous armada. We hope it is not so. Clear we are, at all events, it cannot be the training one receives in this Devil's service, but only our determining to desert from it, that fits us for true manly Action. We become men, not after we have been dissipated, and disappointed in the 1375 chase of false pleasure; but after we have ascertained, in any way, what impassable barriers hem us in through this life; how mad it is to hope for contentment to our infinite soul from the *gifts* of this extremely finite world; that a man must be sufficient for himself; and that for suffering 1380 and enduring there is no remedy but striving and doing.

Manhood begins when we have in any way made truce with Necessity; begins even when we have surrendered to Necessity, as the most part only do; but begins joyfully and hopefully only when we have reconciled ourselves to Necessity; 1385 and thus, in reality, triumphed over it, and felt that in Necessity we are free. Surely, such lessons as this last, which, in one shape or other, is the grand lesson for every mortal man, are better learned from the lips of a devout mother, in the looks and actions of a devout father, while 1390 the heart is yet soft and pliant, than in collision with the sharp adamant of Fate, attracting us to shipwreck us, when

the heart is grown hard, and may be broken before it will become contrite. Had Burns continued to learn this, as he was already learning it, in his father's cottage, he would 1395 have learned it fully, which he never did; and been saved many a lasting aberration, many a bitter hour and year of remorseful sorrow.

43. It seems to us another circumstance of fatal import in Burns's history, that at this time too he became involved 1400 in the religious quarrels of this district; that he was enlisted and feasted, as the fighting man of the New-Light Priesthood, in their highly unprofitable warfare. At the tables of these free-minded clergy he learned much more than was needful for him. Such liberal ridicule of fanati- 1405 cism awakened in his mind scruples about Religion itself; and a whole world of Doubts, which it required quite another set of conjurers than these men to exorcise. We do not say that such an intellect as his could have escaped similar doubts at some period of his history; or even that 1410 he could, at a later period, have come through them altogether victorious and unharmed: but it seems peculiarly unfortunate that this time, above all others, should have been fixed for the encounter. For now, with principles assailed by evil example from without, by "passions raging 1415 like demons" from within, he had little need of sceptical misgivings to whisper treason in the heat of the battle, or to cut off his retreat if he were already defeated. He loses his feeling of innocence; his mind is at variance with itself; the old divinity no longer presides there; but wild 1420 Desires and wild Repentance alternately oppress him. Ere long, too, he has committed himself before the world; his character for sobriety, dear to a Scottish peasant as few corrupted worldlings can even conceive, is destroyed in the eyes of men; and his only refuge consists in trying to dis- 1425 believe his guiltiness, and is but a refuge of lies. The blackest desperation now gathers over him, broken only by

red lightnings of remorse. The whole fabric of his life is blasted asunder; for now not only his character, but his personal liberty, is to be lost; men and Fortune are leagued 1430 for his hurt; "hungry Ruin has him in the wind." He sees no escape but the saddest of all: exiled from his loved country, to a country in every sense inhospitable and abhorrent to him. While the "gloomy night is gathering fast," in mental storm and solitude, as well as in physical, he 1435 sings his wild farewell to Scotland:

Farewell my friends; farewell my foes!
My peace with these, my love with those:
The bursting tears my heart declare;
Adieu, my native banks of Ayr!

1440 44. Light breaks suddenly in on him in floods; but still a false transitory light, and no real sunshine. He is invited to Edinburgh; hastens thither with anticipating heart; is welcomed as in a triumph, and with universal blandishment and acclamation; whatever is wisest, whatever is greatest 1445 or loveliest there, gathers round him, to gaze on his face, to show him honour, sympathy, affection. Burns's appearance among the sages and nobles of Edinburgh must be regarded as one of the most singular phenomena in modern Literature; almost like the appearance of some Napoleon among 1450 the crowned sovereigns of modern Politics. For it is nowise as "a mockery king," set there by favour, transiently and for a purpose, that he will let himself be treated; still less is he a mad Rienzi, whose sudden elevation turns his too weak head: but he stands there on his 1455 own basis; cool, unastonished, holding his equal rank from Nature herself; putting forth no claim which there is not strength *in* him, as well as about him, to vindicate. Mr. Lockhart has some forcible observations on this point:

45. "It needs no effort of imagination," says he, "to conceive 1460 what the sensations of an isolated set of scholars (almost all either clergymen or professors) must have been in the presence of this big-

boned, black-browed, brawny stranger, with his great flashing eyes, who, having forced his way among them from the plough-tail at a single stride, manifested in the whole strain of his bearing and conversation a most thorough conviction, that in the society of the most eminent men of his nation he was exactly where he was entitled to be ; hardly deigned to flatter them by exhibiting even an occasional symptom of being flattered by their notice ; by turns calmly measured himself against the most cultivated understandings of his time in discussion ; overpowered the *bon-mots* of the most celebrated convivialists by broad floods of merriment, impregnated with all the burning life of genius ; astounded bosoms habitually enveloped in the thrice-piled folds of social reserve, by compelling them to tremble, — nay, to tremble visibly, — beneath the fearless touch of natural pathos ; and all this without indicating the smallest willingness to be ranked among those professional ministers of excitement, who are content to be paid in money and smiles for doing what the spectators and auditors would be ashamed of doing in their own persons, even if they had the power of doing it ; the last, and probably worst of all, who was known to be in the habit of enlivening societies which they would have scorned to approach, still more frequently than their own, with eloquence no less magnificent ; with wit, in all likelihood still more daring ; often enough, as the superiors whom he fronted without alarm might have guessed from the beginning, and had ere long no occasion to guess, with wit pointed at themselves.”

46. The farther we remove from this scene, the more singular will it seem to us : details of the exterior aspect of it are already full of interest. Most readers recollect Mr. Walker’s personal interviews with Burns as among the best passages of his Narrative : a time will come when this reminiscence of Sir Walter Scott’s, slight though it is, will also be precious :

47. “As for Burns,” writes Sir Walter, “I may truly say, *Virgilium vidi tantum*. I was a lad of fifteen in 1786-7, when he came first to Edinburgh, but had sense and feeling enough to be much interested in his poetry, and would have given the world to know him : but I had very little acquaintance with any literary people, and still less with the gentry of the west country, the two sets that he most frequented. Mr. Thomas Grierson was at that time a clerk of

1500 my father's. He knew Burns, and promised to ask him to his lodgings to dinner ; but had no opportunity to keep his word ; otherwise I might have seen more of this distinguished man. As it was, I saw him one day at the late venerable Professor Ferguson's, where there were several gentlemen of literary reputation, among whom I remember 1505 the celebrated Mr. Dugald Stewart. Of course, we youngsters sat silent, looked and listened. The only thing I remember which was remarkable in Burns's manner, was the effect produced upon him by a print of Bunbury's, representing a soldier lying dead on the snow, his dog sitting in misery on one side, — on the other, his widow 1510 with a child in her arms. These lines were written beneath ;

‘Cold on Canadian hills, or Minden’s plain,
Perhaps that mother wept her soldier slain ;
Bent o’er her babe, her eye dissolved in dew,
The big drops mingling with the milk he drew,
1515 Gave the sad presage of his future years,
The child of misery baptised in tears.’

48. “ Burns seemed much affected by the print, or rather by the ideas which it suggested to his mind. He actually shed tears. He asked whose the lines were ; and it chanced that nobody but myself 1520 remembered that they occur in a half-forgotten poem of Langhorne’s called by the unpromising title of ‘The Justice of Peace.’ I whispered my information to a friend present ; he mentioned it to Burns, who rewarded me with a look and a word, which, though of mere civility, I then received and still recollect with very great pleasure.

1525 49. “ His person was strong and robust ; his manners rustic, not clownish ; a sort of dignified plainness and simplicity, which received part of its effect perhaps from one’s knowledge of his extraordinary talents. His features are represented in Mr. Nasmyth’s picture : but to me it conveys the idea that they are diminished, as if seen in perspective. I think his countenance was more massive than it looks in any of the portraits. I should have taken the poet, had I not known what he was, for a very sagacious country farmer of the old Scotch school, *i.e.* none of your modern agriculturists who keep labourers for their drudgery, but the *douce gudeman* who held his own plough. 1530 There was a strong expression of sense and shrewdness in all his lineaments ; the eye alone, I think, indicated the poetical character and temperament. It was large, and of a dark cast, which glowed (I say literally *glowed*) when he spoke with feeling or interest. I never saw such another eye in a human head, though I have seen the most dis-

1540 tinguished men of my time. His conversation expressed perfect self-confidence, without the slightest presumption. Among the men who were the most learned of their time and country, he expressed himself with perfect firmness, but without the least intrusive forwardness ; and when he differed in opinion, he did not hesitate to express it firmly, 1545 yet at the same time with modesty. I do not remember any part of his conversation distinctly enough to be quoted ; nor did I ever see him again, except in the street, where he did not recognise me, as I could not expect he should. He was much caressed in Edinburgh : but (considering what literary emoluments have been since his day) 1550 the efforts made for his relief were extremely trifling.

50. "I remember, on this occasion I mention, I thought Burns's acquaintance with English poetry was rather limited ; and also that, having twenty times the abilities of Allan Ramsay and of Ferguson, he talked of them with too much humility as his models : there was 1555 doubtless national predilection in his estimate.

51. "This is all I can tell you about Burns. I have only to add, that his dress corresponded with his manner. He was like a farmer dressed in his best to dine with the laird. I do not speak *in malam partem*, when I say, I never saw a man in company with his superiors 1560 in station or information more perfectly free from either the reality or the affectation of embarrassment. I was told, but did not observe it, that his address to females was extremely deferential, and always with a turn either to the pathetic or humorous, which engaged their attention particularly. I have heard the late Duchess of Gordon remark 1565 this.—I do not know anything I can add to these recollections of forty years since."

52. The conduct of Burns under this dazzling blaze of favour ; the calm, unaffected, manly manner in which he not only bore it, but estimated its value, has justly been 1570 regarded as the best proof that could be given of his real vigour and integrity of mind. A little natural vanity, some touches of hypocritical modesty, some glimmerings of affectation, at least some fear of being thought affected, we could have pardoned in almost any man ; but no such indication is to be traced here. In his unexampled situation the 1575 young peasant is not a moment perplexed ; so many strange lights do not confuse him, do not lead him astray. Never-

theless, we cannot but perceive that this winter did him great and lasting injury. A somewhat clearer knowledge 1580 of men's affairs, scarcely of their characters, it did afford him; but a sharper feeling of Fortune's unequal arrangements in their social destiny it also left with him. He had seen the gay and gorgeous arena, in which the powerful are born to play their parts; nay had himself stood in 1585 the midst of it; and he felt more bitterly than ever, that here he was but a looker-on, and had no part or lot in that splendid game. From this time a jealous indignant fear of social degradation takes possession of him; and perverts, so far as aught could pervert, his private contentment, and 1590 his feelings towards his richer fellows. It was clear to Burns that he had talent enough to make a fortune, or a hundred fortunes, could he but have rightly willed this; it was clear also that he willed something far different, and therefore could not make one. Unhappy it was that he 1595 had not power to choose the one, and reject the other; but must halt forever between two opinions, two objects; making hampered advancement towards either. But so it is with many men: we "long for the merchandise, yet would fain keep the price;" and so stand chaffering with 1600 Fate, in vexatious altercation, till the night come, and our fair is over!

53. The Edinburgh Learned of that period were in general more noted for clearness of head than for warmth of heart: with the exception of the good old Blacklock, 1605 whose help was too ineffectual, scarcely one among them seems to have looked at Burns with any true sympathy, or indeed much otherwise than as at a highly curious *thing*. By the great also he is treated in the customary fashion; entertained at their tables and dismissed: certain modica 1610 of pudding and praise are, from time to time, gladly exchanged for the fascination of his presence; which exchange once effected, the bargain is finished, and each party goes

his several way. At the end of this strange season, Burns gloomily sums up his gains and losses, and meditates on 1615 the chaotic future. In money he is somewhat richer; in faine and the show of happiness, infinitely richer; but in the substance of it, as poor as ever. Nay poorer; for his heart is now maddened still more with the fever of worldly Ambition; and through long years the disease will rack 1620 him with unprofitable sufferings, and weaken his strength for all true and nobler aims.

54. What Burns was next to do or to avoid; how a man so circumstanced was now to guide himself towards his true advantage, might at this point of time have been a question 1625 for the wisest. It was a question too, which apparently he was left altogether to answer for himself: of his learned or rich patrons it had not struck any individual to turn a thought on this so trivial matter. Without claiming for Burns the praise of perfect sagacity, we must say, that his 1630 Excise and Farm scheme does not seem to us a very unreasonable one; that we should be at a loss, even now, to suggest one decidedly better. Certain of his admirers have felt scandalised at his ever resolving to *gauge*; and would have had him lie at the pool, till the spirit of Patronage 1635 stirred the waters, that so, with one friendly plunge, all his sorrows might be healed. Unwise counsellors! They know not the manner of this spirit; and how, in the lap of most golden dreams, a man might have happiness, were it not that in the interim he must die of hunger! It reflects 1640 credit on the manliness and sound sense of Burns, that he felt so early on what ground he was standing; and preferred self-help, on the humblest scale, to dependence and inaction, though with hope of far more splendid possibilities. But even these possibilities were not rejected in 1645 his scheme: he might expect, if it chanced that he *had* any friend, to rise, in no long period, into something even like opulence and leisure; while again, if it chanced that he had

no friend, he could still live in security; and for the rest, he "did not intend to borrow honour from any profession." 1650 We reckon that his plan was honest and well-calculated: all turned on the execution of it. Doubtless it failed; yet not, we believe, from any vice inherent in itself. Nay, after all, it was no failure of external means, but of internal, that overtook Burns. His was no bankruptcy of the 1655 purse, but of the soul; to his last day, he owed no man anything.*

55. Meanwhile he begins well: with two good and wise actions. His donation to his mother, munificent from a man whose income had lately been seven pounds a-year, 1660 was worthy of him, and not more than worthy. Generous also, and worthy of him, was the treatment of the woman whose life's welfare now depended on his pleasure. A friendly observer might have hoped serene days for him: his mind is on the true road to peace with itself: what 1665 clearness he still wants will be given as he proceeds; for the best teacher of duties, that still lie dim to us, is the Practice of those we see and have at hand. Had the "patrons of genius," who could give him nothing, but taken nothing from him, at least nothing more! The 1670 wounds of his heart would have healed, vulgar ambition would have died away. Toil and Frugality would have been welcome, since Virtue dwelt with them; and Poetry would have shone through them as of old; and in her clear ethereal light which was his own by birthright, he might 1675 have looked down on his earthly destiny, and all its obstructions, not with patience only, but with love.

56. But the patron of genius would not have it so. Picturesque tourists,¹ all manner of fashionable danglers

¹ There is one little sketch by certain "English gentlemen" of this class, which, though adopted in Currie's Narrative, and since then repeated in most others, we have all along felt an invincible disposition to regard as imaginary: "On a rock that projected into the stream, they

after literature, and, far worse, all manner of convivial
1680 Mæcenases, hovered round him in his retreat; and his good
as well as his weak qualities secured them influence over
him. He was flattered by their notice; and his warm social
nature made it impossible for him to shake them off, and
hold on his way apart from them. These men, as we
1685 believe, were proximately the means of his ruin. Not that
they meant him any ill; they only meant themselves a
little good; if he suffered harm, let *him* look to it! But
they wasted his precious time and his precious talent; they
disturbed his composure, broke down his returning habits
1690 of temperance and assiduous contented exertion. Their
pampering was baneful to him; their cruelty, which soon
followed, was equally baneful. The old grudge against
Fortune's inequality awoke with new bitterness in their
neighbourhood; and Burns had no retreat but to "the
1695 Rock of Independence," which is but an air-castle after
all, that looks well at a distance, but will screen no one
from real wind and wet.Flushed with irregular excite-
ment, exasperated alternately by contempt of others, and
contempt of himself, Burns was no longer regaining his
1700 peace of mind, but fast losing it forever. There was a
hollowness at the heart of his life, for his conscience did
not now approve what he was doing.

57. Amid the vapours of unwise enjoyment, of bootless
remorse, and angry discontent with Fate, his true loadstar,

saw a man employed in angling, of a singular appearance. He had a cap
made of fox-skin on his head, a loose greatcoat fixed round him by a belt,
from which depended an enormous Highland broad-sword. It was Burns." Now, we rather think, it was not Burns. For to say nothing of the fox-
skin cap, the loose and quite Hibernian watchcoat with the belt, what are
we to make of this "enormous Highland broad-sword" depending from
him? More especially as there is no word of parish constables on the
outlook to see whether, as Dennis phrases it, he had an eye to his own
midriff or that of the public! Burns, of all men, had the least need, and
the least tendency, to seek for distinction, either in his own eyes, or those
of others, by such poor mummeries.—*Carlyle's note.*

1705 a life of Poetry, with Poverty, nay with Famine if it must be so, was too often altogether hidden from his eyes. And yet he sailed a sea, where without some such loadstar there was no right steering. Meteors of French Politics rise before him, but these were not *his* stars. An accident 1710 this, which hastened, but did not originate, his worst distresses. In the mad contentions of that time, he comes in collision with certain official Superiors; is wounded by them; cruelly lacerated, we should say, could a dead mechanical implement, in any case, be called cruel: and 1715 shrinks, in indignant pain, into deeper self-seclusion, into gloomier moodiness than ever. His life has now lost its unity: it is a life of fragments; led with little aim, beyond the melancholy one of securing its own continuance,—in fits of wild false joy when such offered, and of 1720 black despondency when they passed away. His character before the world begins to suffer: calumny is busy with him; for a miserable man makes more enemies than friends. Some faults he has fallen into, and a thousand misfortunes; but deep criminality is what he stands accused of, and they that are *not* without sin cast the first stone at him! For is he not a well-wisher to the French Revolution, a Jacobin, and therefore in that one act guilty of all? These accusations, political and moral, it has since appeared, were false enough: but the world hesitated little 1725 to credit them. Nay his convivial Mæcenases themselves were not the last to do it. There is reason to believe that, in his later years, the Dumfries Aristocracy had partly withdrawn themselves from Burns, as from a tainted person, no longer worthy of their acquaintance. That painful 1730 class, stationed in all provincial cities, behind the outmost breastwork of Gentility, there to stand siege and do battle against the intrusions of Grocerdom and Grazierdom, had actually seen dishonour in the society of Burns, and branded him with their veto; had, as we vulgarly say, *cut him!* We

1740 find one passage in this work of Mr. Lockhart's, which will not out of our thoughts :

1745 58. "A gentleman of that county, whose name I have already more than once had occasion to refer to, has often told me that he was seldom more grieved, than when riding into Dumfries one fine
1750 summer evening about this time to attend a county ball, he saw Burns walking alone, on the shady side of the principal street of the town, while the opposite side was gay with successive groups of gentlemen and ladies, all drawn together for the festivities of the night, not one of whom appeared willing to recognise him. The horseman dis-
1755 mounted, and joined Burns, who on his proposing to cross the street said : 'Nay, nay, my young friend, that's all over now ;' and quoted, after a pause, some verses of Lady Grizzel Baillie's pathetic ballad :

1755 ' His bonnet stood ance fu' fair on his brow,
 His auld ane look'd better than mony ane's new ;
 But now he lets 't wear ony way it will hing,
 And casts himsell dowie upon the corn-bing.

1760 O, were we young as we ance hae been,
 We sud hae been gallopping down on yon green,
 And linking it ower the lily-white lea !
 And werena my heart light, I wad die.'

1765 It was little in Burns's character to let his feelings on certain subjects escape in this fashion. He, immediately after reciting these verses, assumed the sprightliness of his most pleasing manner ; and taking his young friend home with him, entertained him very agreeably till the hour of the ball arrived."

1770 59. Alas ! when we think that Burns now sleeps "where bitter indignation can no longer lacerate his heart,"¹ and that most of those fair dames and frizzled gentlemen already lie at his side, where the breastwork of gentility is quite thrown down, — who would not sigh over the thin delusions and foolish toys that divide heart from heart, and make man unmerciful to his brother.

60. It was not now to be hoped that the genius of Burns

¹ *Ubi sæva indignatio cor ulterius lacerare nequit.* Swift's Epitaph.
 — Carlyle's note.

would ever reach maturity, or accomplish aught worthy of 1775 itself. His spirit was jarred in its melody; not the soft breath of natural feeling, but the rude hand of Fate, was now sweeping over the strings. And yet what harmony was in him, what music even in his discords! How the wild tones had a charm for the simplest and the wisest; 1780 and all men felt and knew that here also was one of the Gifted! "If he entered an inn at midnight, after all the inmates were in bed, the news of his arrival circulated from the cellar to the garret; and ere ten minutes had elapsed, the landlord and all his guests were assembled!" Some 1785 brief pure moments of poetic life were yet appointed him, in the composition of his Songs. We can understand how he grasped at this employment; and how too, he spurned all other reward for it but what the labour itself brought him. For the soul of Burns, though scathed and marred, 1790 was yet living in its full moral strength, though sharply conscious of its errors and abasement: and here, in his destitution and degradation, was one act of seeming nobleness and self-devotedness left even for him to perform. He felt too, that with all the "thoughtless follies" that had 1795 "laid him low," the world was unjust and cruel to him; and he silently appealed to another and calmer time. Not as a hired soldier, but as a patriot, would he strive for the glory of his country: so he cast from him the poor sixpence a-day, and served zealously as a volunteer. Let us not grudge him 1800 this last luxury of his existence; let him not have appealed to us in vain! The money was not necessary to him; he struggled through without it: long since, these guineas would have been gone, and now the high-mindedness of refusing them will plead for him in all hearts forever.

1805 61. We are here arrived at the crisis of Burns's life; for matters had now taken such a shape with him as could not long continue. If improvement was not to be looked for, Nature could only for a limited time maintain this dark

and maddening warfare against the world and itself. We
1810 are not medically informed whether any continuance of years was, at this period, probable for Burns; whether his death is to be looked on as in some sense an accidental event, or only as the natural consequence of the long series of events that had preceded. The latter seems to be the
1815 likelier opinion; and yet it is by no means a certain one.

At all events, as we have said, *some* change could not be very distant. Three gates of deliverance, it seems to us, were open for Burns: clear poetical activity; madness; or death. The first, with longer life, was still possible, though
1820 not probable; for physical causes were beginning to be concerned in it: and yet Burns had an iron resolution; could he but have seen and felt, that not only his highest glory, but his first duty, and the true medicine for all his woes, lay here. The second was still less probable; for his mind was
1825 ever among the clearest and firmest. So the milder third gate was opened for him: and he passed, not softly yet speedily, into that still country, where the hail-storms and fire-showers do not reach, and the heaviest-laden wayfarer at length lays down his load!

1830 62. Contemplating this sad end of Burns, and how he sank unaided by any real help, uncheered by any wise sympathy, generous minds have sometimes figured to themselves, with a reproachful sorrow, that much might have been done for him; that by counsel, true affection and friendly minis-
1835 trations, he might have been saved to himself and the world.

We question whether there is not more tenderness of heart than soundness of judgment in these suggestions. It seems dubious to us whether the richest, wisest, most benevolent individual could have lent Burns any effectual help. Coun-
1840 sel, which seldom profits any one, he did not need; in his understanding, he knew the right from the wrong, as well perhaps as any man ever did; but the persuasion, which

would have availed him, lies not so much in the head as in the heart, where no argument or expostulation could have assisted much to implant it. As to money again, we do not believe that this was his essential want; or well see how any private man could, even presupposing Burns's consent, have bestowed on him an independent fortune, with much prospect of decisive advantage. It is a mortifying truth, 1845 that two men in any rank of society, could hardly be found virtuous enough to give money, and to take it as a necessary gift, without injury to the moral entireness of one or both. But so stands the fact: Friendship, in the old heroic sense of that term, no longer exists; except in the cases of kindred or other legal affinity, it is in reality no longer expected, or recognised as a virtue among men. A close observer of manners has pronounced "Patronage," that is, pecuniary or other economic furtherance, to be "twice cursed;" cursing him that gives, and him that takes! And 1850 thus, in regard to outward matters also, it has become the rule, as in regard to inward it always was and must be the rule, that no one shall look for effectual help to another; but that each shall rest contented with what help he can afford himself. Such, we say, is the principle of modern 1855 Honour; naturally enough growing out of that sentiment of Pride, which we inculcate and encourage as the basis of our whole social morality. Many a poet has been poorer than Burns; but no one was ever prouder: we may question whether, without great precautions, even a pension from 1860 Royalty would not have galled and encumbered, more than actually assisted him.

63. Still less, therefore, are we disposed to join with another class of Burns's admirers, who accuse the higher ranks among us of having ruined Burns by their selfish neglect of 1865 him. We have already stated our doubts whether direct pecuniary help, had it been offered, would have been accepted, or could have proved very effectual. We shall

readily admit, however, that much was to be done for Burns; that many a poisoned arrow might have been 1880 warded from his bosom; many an entanglement in his path cut asunder by the hand of the powerful; and light and heat, shed on him from high places, would have made his humble atmosphere more genial; and the softest heart then breathing might have lived and died with some 1885 fewer pangs. Nay, we shall grant farther, and for Burns it is granting much, that, with all his pride, he would have thanked, even with exaggerated gratitude, any one who had cordially befriended him: patronage, unless once cursed, needed not to have been twice so. At all events, the poor 1890 promotion he desired in his calling might have been granted: it was his own scheme, therefore likelier than any other to be of service. All this it might have been a luxury, nay it was a duty, for our nobility to have done. No part of all this, however, did any of them do; or apparently attempt, 1895 or wish to do: so much is granted against them. But what then is the amount of their blame? Simply that they were men of the world, and walked by the principles of such men; that they treated Burns, as other nobles and other commoners had done other poets; as the English did Shak- 1900 speare; as King Charles and his Cavaliers did Butler, as King Philip and his Grandees did Cervantes. Do men gather grapes of thorns; or shall we cut down our thorns for yielding only a *fence* and *haws*? How, indeed, could the "nobility and gentry of his native land" hold out any 1905 help to this "Scottish Bard, proud of his name and country"? Were the nobility and gentry so much as able rightly to help themselves? Had they not their game to preserve; their borough interests to strengthen; dinners, therefore, of various kinds to eat and give? Were their 1910 means more than adequate to all this business, or less than adequate? Less than adequate, in general; few of them in reality were richer than Burns; many of them were

poorer; for sometimes they had to wring their supplies, as
with thumbscrews, from the hard hand; and, in their need
1915 of guineas, to forget their duty of mercy; which Burns was
never reduced to do. Let us pity and forgive them. The
game they preserved and shot, the dinners they ate and
gave, the borough interests they strengthened, the *little*
Babylons they severally builded by the glory of their might,
1920 are all melted or melting back into the primeval Chaos, as
man's merely selfish endeavours are fated to do: and here
was an action, extending, in virtue of its worldly influence,
we may say, through all time; in virtue of its moral nature,
beyond all time, being immortal as the Spirit of Goodness
1925 itself; this action was offered them to do, and light was not
given them to do it. Let us pity and forgive them. But
better than pity, let us go and *do otherwise*. Human suffering
did not end with the life of Burns; neither was the
solemn mandate, "Love one another, bear one another's
1930 burdens," given to the rich only, but to all men. True, we
shall find no Burns to relieve, to assuage by our aid or our
pity; but celestial natures, groaning under the fardels of a
weary life, we shall still find; and that wretchedness which
Fate has rendered *voiceless* and *tuneless* is not the least
1935 wretched, but the most.

19 64. Still, we do not think that the blame of Burns's failure lies chiefly with the world. The world, it seems to us, treated him with more rather than with less kindness than it usually shows to such men. It has ever, we fear, shown
1940 but small favour to its Teachers: hunger and nakedness, perils and revilings, the prison, the cross, the poison-chalice have, in most times and countries, been the market-price it has offered for Wisdom, the welcome with which it has greeted those who have come to enlighten and purify it.
1945 Homer and Socrates, and the Christian Apostles, belong to old days; but the world's Martyrology was not completed with these. Roger Bacon and Galileo languish in priestly

dungeons; Tasso pines in the cell of a madhouse; Camoens dies begging on the streets of Lisbon. So neglected, so 1950 "persecuted they the Prophets," not in Judea only, but in all places where men have been. We reckon that every poet of Burns's order is, or should be, a prophet and teacher to his age; that he has no right to expect great kindness from it, but rather is bound to do it great kindness; that 1955 Burns, in particular, experienced fully the usual proportion of the world's goodness; and that the blame of his failure, as we have said, lies not chiefly with the world.

65. Where, then, does it lie? We are forced to answer: With himself; it is his inward, not his outward misfortunes 1960 that bring him to the dust. Seldom, indeed, is it otherwise; seldom is a life morally wrecked but the grand cause lies in some internal mal-arrangement, some want less of good fortune than of good guidance. Nature fashions no creature without implanting in it the strength needful for its action 1965 and duration; least of all does she so neglect her masterpiece and darling, the poetic soul. Neither can we believe that it is in the power of *any* external circumstances utterly to ruin the mind of a man; nay if proper wisdom be given him, even so much as to affect its essential health and beauty. 1970 The sternest sum-total of all worldly misfortunes is Death; nothing more *can* lie in the cup of human woe: yet many men, in all ages, have triumphed over Death, and led it captive; converting its physical victory into a moral victory for themselves, into a seal and immortal consecration for 1975 all that their past life had achieved. What has been done, may be done again: nay, it is but the degree and not the kind of such heroism that differs in different seasons: for without some portion of this spirit, not of boisterous daring, but of silent fearlessness, of Self-denial in all its forms, no 1980 good man, in any scene or time, has ever attained to be good.

66. We have already stated the error of Burns; and

mourned over it rather than blamed it. It was the want of unity in his purposes, of consistency in his aims; the 1985 hapless attempt to mingle in friendly union the common spirit of the world with the spirit of poetry, which is of a far different and altogether irreconcilable nature. Burns was nothing wholly, and Burns could be nothing, no man formed as he was can be anything, by halves. The heart, 1990 not of a mere hot-blooded, popular Versemonger, or poetical *Restaurateur*, but of a true Poet and Singer, worthy of the old religious heroic times, had been given him: and he fell in an age, not of heroism and religion, but of scepticism, selfishness and triviality, when true Nobleness was little 1995 understood, and its place supplied by a hollow, dissocial, altogether barren and unfruitful principle of Pride. The influences of that age, his open, kind, susceptible nature, to say nothing of his highly untoward situation, made it more than usually difficult for him to cast aside, or rightly 2000 subordinate; the better spirit that was within him ever sternly demanded its rights, its supremacy: he spent his life in endeavouring to reconcile these two; and lost it, as he must lose it, without reconciling them.

67. Burns was born poor; and born also to continue 2005 poor, for he would not endeavour to be otherwise: this it had been well could he have once for all admitted, and considered as finally settled. He was poor, truly; but hundreds even of his own class and order of minds have been poorer, yet have suffered nothing deadly from it: nay, his 2010 own Father had a far sorcerous battle with ungrateful destiny than his was; and he did not yield to it, but died courageously warring, and to all moral intents prevailing, against it. True, Burns had little means, had even little time for poetry, his only real pursuit and vocation; but so much the 2015 more precious was what little he had. In all these external respects his case was hard; but very far from the hardest. Poverty, incessant drudgery and much worse evils, it has

often been the lot of Poets and wise men to strive with, and their glory to conquer. Locke was banished as a traitor; 2020 and wrote his *Essay on the Human Understanding*, sheltering himself in a Dutch garret. Was Milton rich or at his ease when he composed *Paradise Lost*? Not only low, but fallen from a height; not only poor, but impoverished; in darkness and with dangers compassed round, he sang his im- 2025 mortal song, and found fit audience, though few. Did not Cervantes finish his work, a maimed soldier and in prison? Nay, was not the *Araucana*, which Spain acknowledges as its Epic, written without even the aid of paper; on scraps of leather, as the stout fighter and voyager snatched any 2030 moment from that wild warfare?

68. And what, then, had these men, which Burns wanted? Two things; both which, it seems to us, are indispensable for such men. They had a true, religious principle of morals; and a single, not a double aim in their activity. 2035 They were not self-seekers and self-worshippers; but seekers and worshippers of something far better than Self. Not personal enjoyment was their object; but a high, heroic idea of Religion, of Patriotism, of heavenly Wisdom, in one or the other form, ever hovered before them; in which cause 2040 they neither shrank from suffering, nor called on the earth to witness it as something wonderful; but patiently endured, counting it blessedness enough so to spend and be spent. Thus the "golden-calf of Self-love," however curiously carved, was not their Deity; but the invisible Goodness, 2045 which alone is man's reasonable service. This feeling was as a celestial fountain, whose streams refreshed into gladness and beauty all the provinces of their otherwise too desolate existence. In a word, they willed one thing, to which all other things were subordinated and made subservient; 2050 and therefore they accomplished it. The wedge will rend rocks; but its edge must be sharp and single: if it be double, the wedge is bruised in pieces and will rend nothing.

69. Part of this superiority these men owed to their age; in which heroism and devotedness were still practised, or 2055 at least not yet disbelieved in: but much of it likewise they owed to themselves. With Burns, again, it was different. His morality, in most of its practical points, is that of a mere worldly man; enjoyment, in a finer or coarser shape, is the only thing he longs and strives for. 2060 A noble instinct sometimes raises him above this; but an instinct only, and acting only for moments. He has no Religion; in the shallow age, where his days were cast, Religion was not discriminated from the New and Old Light *forms* of Religion; and was, with these, becoming 2065 obsolete in the minds of men. His heart, indeed, is alive with a trembling adoration, but there is no temple in his understanding. He lives in darkness and in the shadow of doubt. His religion, at best, is an anxious wish; like that of Rabelais, "a great Perhaps."

2070 70. He loved Poetry warmly, and in his heart; could he but have loved it purely, and with his whole undivided heart, it had been well. For Poetry, as Burns could have followed it, is but another form of Wisdom, of Religion; is itself Wisdom and Religion. But this also was denied 2075 him. His poetry is a stray vagrant gleam, which will not be extinguished within him, yet rises not to be the true light of his path, but is often a wildfire that misleads him. It was not necessary for Burns to be rich, to be, or to seem, "independent;" but it *was* necessary for him to be at one 2080 with his own heart; to place what was highest in his nature highest also in his life; "to seek within himself for that consistency and sequence, which external events would forever refuse him." He was born a poet; poetry was the celestial element of his being, and should have been the 2085 soul of his whole endeavours. Lifted into that serene ether, whither he had wings given him to mount, he would have needed no other elevation: poverty, neglect and all

evil, save the desecration of himself and his Art, were a small matter to him; the pride and the passions of the 2090 world lay far beneath his feet; and he looked down alike on noble and slave, on prince and beggar, and all that wore the stamp of man, with clear recognition, with brotherly affection, with sympathy, with pity. Nay, we question whether for his culture as a Poet poverty and much suffering 2095 for a season were not absolutely advantageous. Great men, in looking back over their lives, have testified to that effect. "I would not for much," says Jean Paul, "that I had been born richer." And yet Paul's birth was poor enough; for, in another place, he adds: "The prisoner's 2100 allowance is bread and water; and I had often only the latter." But the gold that is refined in the hottest furnace comes out the purest; or, as he has himself expressed it, "the canary-bird sings sweeter the longer it has been trained in a darkened cage."

2105 71. A man like Burns might have divided his hours between poetry and virtuous industry; industry which all true feeling sanctions, nay prescribes, and which has a beauty, for that cause, beyond the pomp of thrones: but to divide his hours between poetry and rich men's banquets 2110 was an ill-starred and inauspicious attempt. How could he be at ease at such banquets? What had he to do there, mingling his music with the coarse roar of altogether earthly voices; brightening the thick smoke of intoxication with fire lent him from heaven? Was it his aim to *enjoy* 2115 life? To-morrow he must go drudge as an Exciseman! We wonder not that Burns became moody, indignant, and at times an offender against certain rules of society; but rather that he did not grow utterly frantic, and run *amuck* against them all. How could a man, so falsely placed, by his own 2120 or others' fault, ever know contentment or peaceable diligence for an hour? What he did, under such perverse guidance, and what he forbore to do, alike fill us with aston-

ishment at the natural strength and worth of his character.

2125 72. Doubtless there was a remedy for this perverseness; but not in others; only in himself; least of all in simple increase of wealth and worldly "respectability." We hope we have now heard enough about the efficacy of wealth for poetry, and to make poets happy. Nay have we not seen
2130 another instance of it in these very days? Byron, a man of an endowment considerably less ethereal than that of Burns, is born in the rank not of a Scottish ploughman, but of an English peer: the highest worldly honours, the fairest worldly career, are his by inheritance; the richest
2135 harvest of fame he soon reaps, in another province, by his own hand. And what does all this avail him? Is he happy, is he good, is he true? Alas, he has a poet's soul, and strives towards the Infinite and the Eternal; and soon feels that all this is but mounting to the house-top to reach the
2140 stars! Like Burns, he is only a proud man; might, like him, have "purchased a pocket-copy of Milton to study the character of Satan;" for Satan also is Byron's grand exemplar, the hero of his poetry, and the model apparently of his conduct. As in Burns's case too, the celestial element will
2145 not mingle with the clay of earth; both poet and man of the world he must not be; vulgar Ambition will not live kindly with poetic Adoration; he *cannot* serve God and Mammon. Byrón, like Burns, is not happy; nay he is the most wretched of all men. His life is falsely arranged: the
2150 fire that is in him is not a strong, still, central fire, warming into beauty the products of a world; but it is the mad fire of a volcano; and now — we look sadly into the ashes of the crater, which ere long will fill itself with snow!

73. Byron and Burns were sent forth as missionaries
2155 to their generation, to teach it a higher Doctrine, a purer Truth; they had a message to deliver, which left them no rest till it was accomplished; in dim throes of pain, this



divine behest lay smouldering within them ; for they knew not what it meant, and felt it only in mysterious anticipa-
2160 tion, and they had to die without articulately uttering it. They are in the camp of the Unconverted ; yet not as high messengers of rigorous though benignant truth, but as soft flattering singers, and in pleasant fellowship will they live there : they are first adulated, then persecuted ; they accom-
2165 plish little for others ; they find no peace for themselves, but only death and the peace of the grave. We confess, it is not without a certain mournful awe that we view the fate of these noble souls, so richly gifted, yet ruined to so little purpose with all their gifts. It seems to us there is a stern
2170 moral taught in this piece of history, — *twice* told us in our own time ! Surely to men of like genius, if there be any such, it carries with it a lesson of deep impressive significance. Surely it would become such a man, furnished for the highest of all enterprises, that of being the Poet of his
2175 Age, to consider well what it is that he attempts, and in what spirit he attempts it. For the words of Milton are true in all times, and were never truer than in this : “ He who would write heroic poems must make his whole life a heroic poem.” If he cannot first so make his life, then let him
2180 hasten from this arena ; for neither its lofty glories, nor its fearful perils, are fit for him. Let him dwindle into a modish balladmonger ; let him worship and besing the idols of the time, and the time will not fail to reward him. If, indeed, he can endure to live in that capacity ! Byron and
2185 Burns could not live as idol-priests, but the fire of their own hearts consumed them ; and better it was for them that they could not. For it is not in the favour of the great or of the small, but in a life of truth, and in the inexpugnable citadel of his own soul, that a Byron's or a Burns's strength must
2190 lie. Let the great stand aloof from him, or know how to reverence him. Beautiful is the union of wealth with favour and furtherance for literature ; like the costliest flower-jar

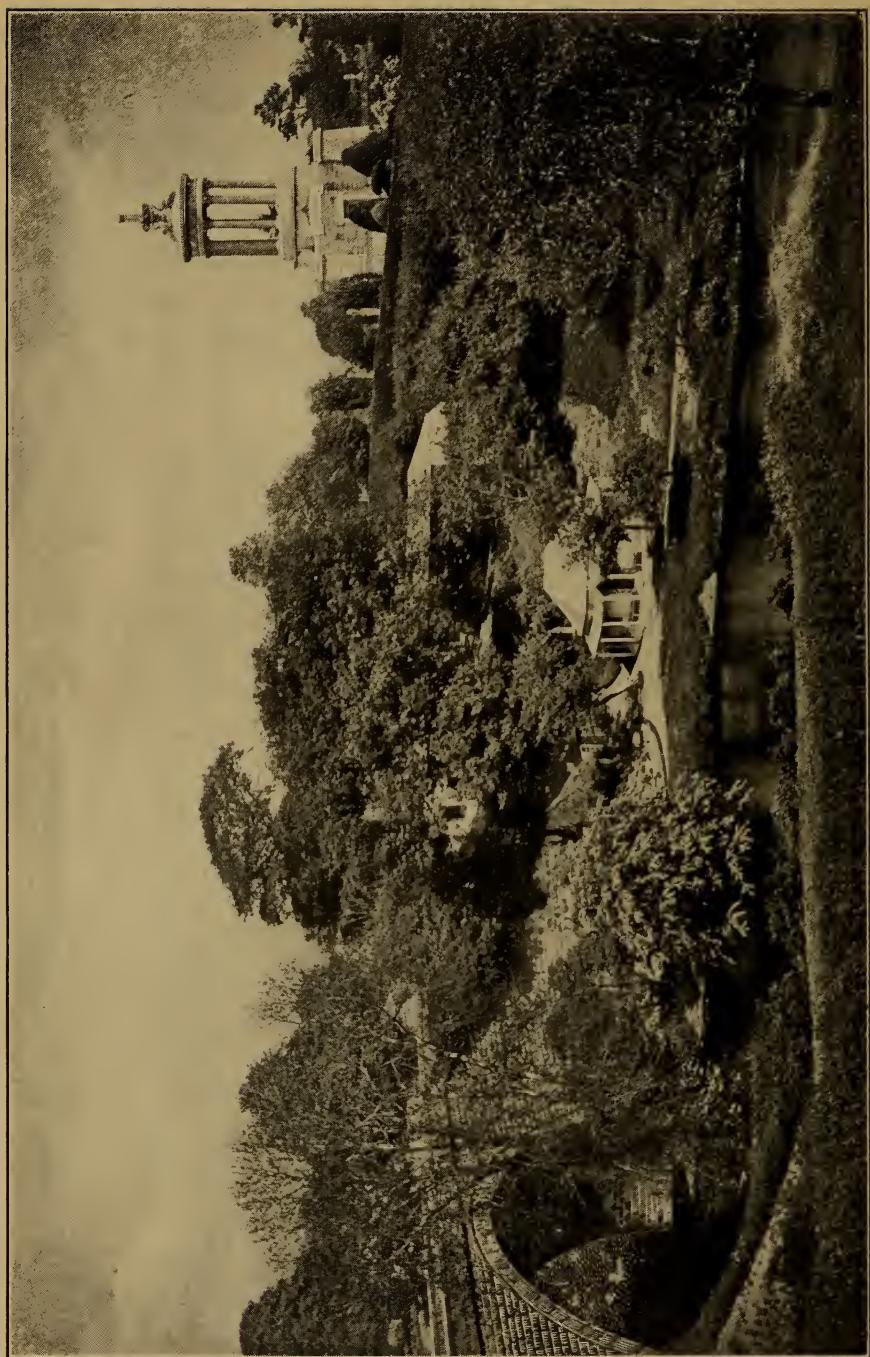
enclosing the loveliest amaranth. Yet let not the relation be mistaken. A true poet is not one whom they can hire by
2195 money or flattery to be a minister of their pleasures, their writer of occasional verses, their purveyor of table-wit; he cannot be their menial, he cannot even be their partisan.

At the peril of both parties, let no such union be attempted !

Will a Courser of the Sun work softly in the harness of a
2200 Dray-horse ? His hoofs are of fire, and his path is through the heavens, bringing light to all lands; will he lumber on mud highways, dragging ale for earthly appetites from door to door ?

74. But we must stop short in these considerations, which
2205 would lead us to boundless lengths. We had something to say on the public moral character of Burns; but this also we must forbear. We are far from regarding him as guilty before the world, as guiltier than the average; nay from
2210 doubting that he is less guilty than one of ten thousand.

Tried at a tribunal far more rigid than that where the *Plebiscita* of common civic reputations are pronounced, he has seemed to us even there less worthy of blame than of pity and wonder. But the world is habitually unjust in its judgments of such men; unjust on many grounds, of which
2215 this one may be stated as the substance: It decides, like a court of law, by dead statutes; and not positively but negatively, less on what is done right, than on what is or is not done wrong. Not the few inches of deflection from the mathematical orbit, which are so easily measured, but the
2220 *ratio* of these to the whole diameter, constitutes the real aberration. This orbit may be a planet's, its diameter the breadth of the solar system; or it may be a city hippodrome; nay the circle of a ginhorse, its diameter a score of feet or paces. But the inches of deflection only are measured: and it is assumed that the diameter of the ginhorse, and that of the planet, will yield the same ratio when compared with them ! Here lies the root of many a blind, cruel



MAUSOLEUM OF BURNS.
From a photograph.

condemnation of Burnses, Swifts, Rousseaus, which one never listens to with approval. Granted, the ship comes 2230 into harbour with shrouds and tackle damaged ; the pilot is blameworthy ; he has not been all-wise and all-powerful : but to know *how* blameworthy, tell us first whether his voyage has been round the Globe, or only to Ramsgate and the Isle of Dogs.

2235 75. With our readers in general, with men of right feeling anywhere, we are not required to plead for Burns. In pitying admiration he lies enshrined in all our hearts, in a far nobler mausoleum than that one of marble ; neither will his Works, even as they are, pass away from the memory of 2240 men. ~~T~~While the Shakspeares and Miltons roll on like mighty rivers through the country of Thought, bearing fleets of traffickers and assiduous pearl-fishers on their waves ; this little Valclusa Fountain will also arrest our eye : for this also is of Nature's own and most cunning 2245 workmanship, bursts from the depths of the earth, with a full gushing current, into the light of day ; and often will the traveller turn aside to drink of its clear waters, and muse among its rocks and pines !

NOTES

I. SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

THE ultimate object in the study of all literature is the development of character and the increase, which comes through the sympathetic understanding and enjoyment of what certain people have had to say to the world, of one's own happiness, and, through that, of one's own power of self-expression — the production of other literature, in short. The more immediate object of the reading of such an essay as the present is, with of course the same ultimate aim, to gain a pretty exact knowledge (1) of just what Carlyle means in his talk about Burns, (2) of the manner in which Carlyle has brought home and made vivid his meaning, and, (3) most important, of the peculiar way he had of looking at things, the traits of his character and the strength of his vision which caused him to speak of Burns as he has done. If a student has gained a fair idea of these points, he will have an acquaintance of all that is really essential in the essay, and will have a sound method for future literary study.

In aiding students to obtain this knowledge of the detail of the essay and of the writer's point of view, the teacher will naturally pursue the method which suits him best. In any case, however, a sound understanding of what one might call the language and facts of the essay should precede further inquiry. The essay should be read through as a whole, first; then the student should see that he understands the detail. It is to this end that the Explanatory Notes immediately following are introduced. As an aid to the comprehending of the larger aspects of the essay, its arrangement as a whole, its style, and its most important feature, the expression of Carlyle's personality, these notes are followed by Questions on the Essay, and, for those students who care to pursue the subject more deeply, by a Bibliography. These the teacher should use at his discretion. If the essay is wholly intelligible without such aids to reflection, they had better remain in the background. The Appen-

dix contains selections from the poems of Burns, to enable a student to gather his own impressions. The Introduction may be read at the start to clear up the ground.

It may be added that a good plan for testing the student's grasp of the essay is the writing, in class, so far as time allows, of paragraphs and short essays dealing with various topics taken from the text. These may have to do with the meaning of words, the conduct of sentences and paragraphs, the facts of Burns's life, the principles of Carlyle, and the like. A careful reading of the essay as a whole is, however, to be insisted on as the necessary prelude to all such exercise. In a word, (1) let the student strive to gain a knowledge of the essay as a whole, with whatever is necessary to his understanding of the circumstances of its composition; (2) then let him master the details and the significance of them; finally, (3) let his knowledge be tested by whatever method is most available.

II. EXPLANATORY NOTES

- 2 **Butler.** Samuel Butler (1612–1680), the author of *Hudibras*, a satirical poem. The reference is to the unfulfilled promises made him by Charles II as a reward for his poem. He died in poverty seventeen years after its publication.
- 6 **The inventor of a spinning-jenny.** James Hargreaves, who invented this very useful machine in 1767, found himself, contrary to Carlyle's dictum, involved in lawsuits because of his invention.
- 11 **Might yet have been living.** Burns would have been less than seventy years old.
- 14 **Brave mausoleum.** At Dumfries. *Brave* is used in the rather obsolete sense of *splendid, making a fine show*, and is here ironical. Lockhart says, Ch. IX, that the structure "is perhaps more gaudy than one might have wished."
- 17 **The highest personages in our literature.** In the literature of Scotland. The phrase is obviously ironical; see the following clauses of the sentence.
- 19 **The sixth narrative.** Before Lockhart, there had been, in addition to various criticisms of the poet, lives by Heron (1797), Currie (1800), Irving (1804), Walker (1811), Peterkin (1815), and Hamilton Paul (1819).

21 **Lockhart.** John Gibson Lockhart (1794–1854) was Sir Walter Scott's son-in-law and author of the famous life of Scott, one of the most notable biographies in English.

37 **Sir Thomas Lucy.** Lucy was a country squire, proprietor of Charlecote near Stratford, from whom Shakspere is said to have stolen deer, an offense for which the poet was cited. **John a Combe.** A wealthy neighbor of Shakspere, near Stratford.

44 **Bowels.** Compare the phrase “bowels of compassion.” Nowadays we say heart.

46–50 Many of these apparent titles are due merely to Carlyle's liking for capital letters.

47 **Gentlemen of the Caledonian Hunt.** The Caledonian Hunt was a society of Scotch nobility and gentry established to promote field sports. They had subscribed for Burns's poems, and to them he dedicated the second, or Edinburgh edition, of his poems.

49 **Ayr Writers.** The lawyers, solicitors, and possibly their clerks of the town of Ayr. **The New and Old Light Clergy.** Respectively the moderate and the evangelical parties into which the Church of Scotland was divided. See Introduction, Note on the Life of Burns.

95 **Constable's Miscellany.** Archibald Constable, the first publisher of the *Edinburgh Review*, the man whose failure in 1826 involved Scott, was the originator, on a large scale, in his *Miscellany of Original and Selected Publications in Literature, Science, and the Arts*, of the modern scheme of cheap popular editions of good pieces of literature.

100 **Nervous**, having spirit, force, vitality.

104 **Morris Birkbeck.** Author of *Notes on a Journey in America from the Coast of Virginia to the Territory of Illinois* (1818), and *Letters from Illinois* (1818).

107 **But there are better things than these in the volume**, etc. Professor Noyes points out that this was not Carlyle's first opinion, and cites a letter of Carlyle to his brother, dated June 10, 1828: “Lockhart had written a kind of life of Burns, and men in general were making another uproar about Burns; it is this book (a trivial enough one) that I am to pretend reviewing.”

149 **Nine days.** An allusion to the phrase a "nine days' wonder," at least as old as Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*.

178 **Born in an age the most prosaic Britain had yet seen.** Compare Note on the Life of Burns, Introduction.

184 **Ferguson.** Robert Ferguson (1750–1774). **Ramsay.** Allan Ramsay (1686–1758), author of pastoral poems of which the best known is *The Gentle Shepherd* (1725). These two precursors of Burns had considerable influence on him, and Ferguson directly stimulated him to write several of his best-known poems. Apparently Burns thought more highly of these poets than did Carlyle. He spoke of them as "The excellent Ramsay, and the still more excellent Ferguson."—*Commonplace Book*, August, 1784.

220 **Sir Hudson Lowe.** Lowe was governor of St. Helena during the captivity of Napoleon on that island (1815–1821).

254 **The Daisy.** For the poem *To a Mountain Daisy*, see Appendix, p. 89.

256 **Wee, cowering, timorous beastie.** For the poem *To a Mouse*, see Appendix, p. 91.

258 **The hoar visage of Winter.** Compare "In . . . the hoary majesty of winter, the poet feels a charm unknown to the most of his species." Letter of Burns to Miss Kennedy, 1785.

259 **He dwells with a sad and oft-returning fondness, etc.** Compare for the inspiration of this passage the words from Burns's *Commonplace Book*, April, 1784: "There is scarcely any earthly object gives me more—I don't know if I should call it pleasure, but something which exalts me, something which enraptures me—than to walk in the sheltered side of a wood or high plantation, in a cloudy, winter day, and hear a stormy wind howling among the trees and raving o'er the plain. It is my best season for devotion; my mind is rapt up in a kind of enthusiasm to Him who, in the pompous language of Scripture, 'Walks on the wings of the wind.'" It was under such circumstances, Burns tells us, that he composed the dirge *Winter*. The italics of the passage are from Psalm civ.

271 **Arcadian.** Arcadia was the central and inland province of the Peloponnesus, a province famed in literature, as for example in Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*, for the pastoral

simplicity and charm of its life. The allusion here is to the fact that Burns lived in the reality, not the poet's dream, of peasant life.

304 **A soul like an Æolian harp**, etc. Compare 778, a favorite figure apparently.

306 **And this was he**, etc. See Introduction, Note on the Life of Burns.

329 **The wildest vicissitudes in poetic taste**. Compare what Carlyle says of Keats, 725.

362 **Si vis me flere**. Compare Horace, *Ars Poetica*, 102–103:—

“*Si vis me flere, dolendum est
Primum ipsi tibi.*”

(If you wish me to weep, you must first mourn yourself.)

398 **Strong waters**. Distilled or ardent spirits.

400 **Harolds**. Harold is the hero of the narrative poem *The Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. **Giaours**. *The Giaour* is a romantic narrative poem of Byron.

415 **Don Juan**. Byron's longest and most famous poem.

464 **Mrs. Dunlop**. A patriotic Scotch lady of high birth and good fortune who was so much attracted by Burns's poems and especially by *The Cotter's Saturday Night* that she took express pains to assure the poet of her good-will: the result was a friendly correspondence which lasted till Burns's death.

478 **Rose-coloured Novels**, etc., to line 485. Carlyle here attacks sentimental literature of all sorts, from weak, vapid novels to highly colored and passionate romances. The particular allusions are to Southey, Moore, Scott, and Cooper, and possibly to some others.

526 **Vates**. Soothsayer, prophet.

529 **Delphi**. The chief shrine of Phœbus, the god of poetry, near Mt. Parnassus in Greece.

533 **Minerva Press**. “A printing-house in London, which was noted in the eighteenth century for the publication of trashy sentimental novels.”—*Century Dictionary of Names*.

540 **The elder dramatists**. The Elizabethan dramatists, usually exclusive of Shakspere, down to the time of the so-called “Restoration dramatists.” The reference is to the poetry for which these dramatists are famous.

548 **Travels from Dan to Beersheba, and finds it all barren**. Liter-

ally, from the extreme north to the extreme south of Palestine; figuratively, from one end of the world to the other.

557 **Borgia.** The Borgias were an Italian family whence came many cardinals and popes. The "sins of the Borgias" were notorious. Carlyle probably alludes to Cæsar Borgia, one of the ablest and most wicked of the race. **Luther.** The leader of the Protestant Reformation, a man whose passion was righteous indignation against evil, the opposite of a Borgia-like profligacy.

560 **Mossgiel and Tarbolton.** See Introduction, Note on the Life of Burns.

561 **Crockford's.** A famous gambling house in London.

562 **Tuileries.** A famous French royal palace adjoining the Louvre, destroyed by the Commune in 1871.

565 **Inasmuch as poetry . . . vanished from the earth.** The allusion is to Macaulay's *Essay on Milton* (1825), which was being widely read.

580 **The Wounded Hare.** See Appendix, p. 92.

582 **Halloween.** See Appendix, p. 89.

584 **Druids.** The priests of Britain before the occupation by the Romans. **Theocritus.** A Greek idyllic poet of about 270 B.C.

585 **Holy Fair.** The poem should be read to understand the references which follow; *Superstition*, *Hypocrisy*, and *Fun* are characters in it. See Appendix, p. 89.

586 **Council of Trent.** The famous council held at Trent in the Tyrol in 1545–1563 to condemn the doctrines of the Reformation. **Roman Jubilee.** A festal year in the Roman Catholic Church, occurring every twenty-five or fifty years, during which a pilgrimage to Rome and other acts of penance could purchase pardon from the penal consequences of sin.

625 **Burin.** The cutting tool of an engraver. **Retzsch.** F. A. M. Retzsch (1779–1857), a German painter and designer, whose illustrations of Goethe and Schiller probably were what attracted Carlyle to him.

631 **Winter Night.** See Appendix, p. 89. *Fell*, keen. *Doure*, stern. *Glowr*, stare. *Lift*, sky. *'Ae*, one. *Burns*, rivulets. *Bock'd*, belched.

653 **Auld Brig.** From Burns's poem, *The Brigs of Ayr*. See Appendix, p. 89. *Thowes*, thaws. *Snow-broo rowes*, snow-broth

rolls. *Speat*, flood. *A'* to the gate, out of the way. *Gumlie jaups*, muddy splashing waves.

659 **Haunted Garpal . . . Fabulosus Hydaspes.** Storied Hydaspes. The Hydaspes (modern Jhelam), a river between the Indus and the Ganges, marked the eastern limit of Alexander's conquests. The phrase, from the *Odes of Horace*, I, 22, suggested itself to Carlyle as parallel to "haunted Garpal."

668 **Poussin.** Nicholas Poussin (1594–1665), a French painter of landscapes.

672 **Farmer's and Auld Mare.** See Appendix, p. 89.

674 **Smithy of the Cyclops.** For the story of Odysseus and his adventures with the thunderbolt-forging Cyclops of Mt. Etna and the giant Polyphemus, see Homer's *Odyssey*, Book IX. **Yoking of Priam's Chariot.** See *Iliad*, Book XXIV.

675 **Burn-the-wind.** The Scotch name for blacksmith in the poem *Scotch Drink*. See Appendix, p. 89.

679 **Songs.** The special part of the poetry of Burns known as his *Songs* numbered nearly three hundred pieces. See Carlyle's discussion of them, pp. 30 ff.

681 **The pale Moon, etc.** This is incorrectly quoted by Carlyle from an alteration by Burns of an Irish song. See Appendix, p. 93.

692 **Richardson.** Samuel Richardson (1689–1761), the so-called father of the modern English novel, author of the famous novel *Clarissa Harlowe*.

693 **Defoe.** Daniel Defoe (1661–1731), author of *Robinson Crusoe* and many other stories.

709 **Red-wat-shod, red-wet-shod,** with blood-stained feet. From the poetical *Epistle to William Simson*. See Appendix, p. 89.

715 **Professor Stewart.** Dugald Stewart (1753–1828), professor of moral philosophy in the University of Edinburgh, who "breathed the love of virtue into whole generations of pupils."

725 **Keats.** John Keats (1795–1821), one of the very great English poets. Carlyle here treats him with great lack of sympathy and intelligence.

733 **The Hell of Dante.** See Dante's *Inferno*, the first of the three parts of his *Divine Comedy*. See what Macaulay in the *Essay on Milton* has to say about Dante's imagination.

739 **Novum Organum**, the chief philosophical work of Francis Bacon (1561–1626). For an alleged relation between Bacon and Shakspere, see the famous Shakspere-Bacon controversy. Consult Poole's *Index* for articles.

761 **The passage above quoted.** Evidently in some omitted part. For a word on the omitted part of Stewart's letter, see Lockhart, Ch. V.

762 **Doctrine of association.** The psychological doctrine of the combination or connection of states of mind with one another, or of their objects with one another, by which ideas and objects are recalled to mind.

766 **Thus writes he.** To Mrs. Dunlop, January 1, 1789.

818 **I thought me on the ourie cattle**, etc. From the poem *A Winter Night*. See Appendix, p. 89. *Ourie*, shivering. *Silly*, helpless. *Bide*, endure. *Brattle*, pelting. *Deep-lairing*, sinking deep. *Sprattle*, scramble. *Scaur*, cliff. *Ilk*, every. *Happing*, hopping. *Chittering*, trembling.

836 **But fare you weel**, etc. From the *Address to the De'il*. See Appendix, p. 89. *Nickie-ben*, Nick, old fellow. *Men'*, amend. *Aiblins*, perhaps. *Dinna ken*, don't know. *Still hae a stake*, still have a chance. *Wae*, sorry.

842 and 844 **Dr. Slop and Uncle Toby.** Characters in *Tristram Shandy*, by Laurence Sterne (1713–1768).

846 The two following paragraphs were not in the essay as printed in the *Edinburgh Review*.

847 **Indignation makes verses.** *Facit indignatio versum.* Juvenal, I, 79.

856 **Johnson.** Samuel Johnson (1709–1784), author of *Rasselas*, the *Lives of the Poets*, and a famous dictionary.

869 **Dweller in yon Dungeon dark.** From the ode *Sacred to the Memory of Mrs. Oswald*. See Appendix, p. 89.

870 **The Furies of Æschylus.** The Erinyes, or, as they were called for the sake of propitiation, the Eumenides, were in Greek mythology the goddesses who avenged crime. The reference is to the *Eumenides* of Æschylus, one of the great Greek tragedians, wherein the Furies were introduced in the chorus.

872 **Darkness visible.** *Paradise Lost*, I, 63.

880 **Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled.** For Burns's *Bannockburn*, see Appendix, p. 94.

882 This dithyrambic was composed on horseback, etc. Burns, writing to George Thomson, a publisher, September, 1793, says concerning the writing of the poem, "This thought [i.e. of Bruce's march at the battle of Bannockburn], in my yesternight's evening-walk, warmed me to a pitch of enthusiasm on the theme of liberty and independence, which I threw into a kind of Scots Ode, fitted to the air [i.e. of "Hey, tutti, taitie"], that one might suppose to be the gallant royal Scot's address to his heroic followers on that eventful morning." This is at variance with Syme's account, which Dr. Currie gave credence to in his life of Burns.

895 **Macpherson's Farewell.** See Appendix, p. 95.

898 **Cacus**, the half-man whom Hercules slew for stealing the cattle under his charge. See Virgil, Aeneid, VIII, 185-279.

899 **Nimrod**, the prototype of hunters. See *Genesis x.*

908 **At Thebes, and in Pelops' line.** The reference is to Milton's *Il Penseroso*, line 99. What Carlyle means by "material Fate matched against man's Free-will," etc., is best represented, among these allusions, by the tale of Laius and Jocasta, and their vain attempt to avert the oracle which said that their son, Oedipus, should slay his father and marry his mother. The story of Oedipus and Jocasta is the subject of the *Oedipus Tyrannus* of Sophocles.

929 For these poems, already mentioned, see Appendix.

930 **Elegy on poor Mailie.** See Appendix, p. 96.

933 **Sterne.** See note to 842.

944 **Tam o' Shanter.** See Appendix, p. 89.

957 **Tieck . . . Musäus.** Ludwig Tieck (1773-1853) and Johann Karl August Musäus (1735-1787) worked with the material of popular legends, but the latter treated his material in a satirical vein rather than in the spirit of the original.

962 **Tophet.** Compare Milton, *Paradise Lost*, I, 404-405:—

"The pleasant valley of Hinnom, Tophet thence
And black Gehenna called, the type of Hell."

980 **The Jolly Beggars.** See Appendix, p. 89.

987 **Raucle carlin**, stout old woman. This and the following references are to people in the poem.

1005 **Teniers.** David Teniers (1610–1694), a celebrated Flemish painter of the scenes of low life.

1010 **Beggars' Opera.** By John Gay (1685–1732). **Beggars' Bush.** By John Fletcher (1579–1625). Says Lockhart, *Life of Burns*, Ch. IX, “*Beggars' Bush* and *Beggars' Opera* sink into tameness in the comparison.”

1017 **Songs.** Compare note to 679.

1030 **Persons of quality.** Persons of rank or birth.

1032 **Ossorius the Portugal Bishop.** The quotation is from Bacon *Of the Advancement of Learning*, Book I. Jeronymo Osorio (1506–1580) was called “the Cicero of Portugal,” because of his Latin style.

1038 **Limbo.** Borderland. For a more specific meaning see Milton, *Paradise Lost*, III, 495.

1070 **Willie brew'd a Peck o' Maut.** See Appendix, p. 97.

1071 **Mary in Heaven.** See Appendix, p. 98.

1072 **Auld Langsyne.** See Appendix, p. 99.

1073 **Duncan Gray.** See Appendix, p. 100.

1080 **Fletcher.** Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun (1655–1716), a Scotch political writer.

1107 **Our Grays and Glovers.** Thomas Gray (1716–1771), the author of the *Elegy written in a Country Churchyard*, one of the best-known English poets. Richard Glover (1712–1785), a now little read writer of epics and verses of a semi-political character.

1112 **Goldsmith.** Oliver Goldsmith (1728–1774) gives, in his *Deserted Village*, as well as in *The Vicar of Wakefield* and *She Stoops to Conquer*, purer sketches of English life than his contemporaries here mentioned. **Johnson.** See note to 856. The *Rambler* was a periodical after the manner of Addison's *Spectator*. The scene of *Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia*, is a wholly imaginary one, but the characters are as much English as anything else.

1119 **Geneva.** Geneva, the capital of Switzerland, has, from its situation, been a meeting place of the nations adjoining it. Calvin lived there, and Voltaire found it a city of refuge from persecution.

1121 **Addison and Steele . . . Spectators.** Joseph Addison (1672–1719) and Richard Steele (1672–1729) introduced

into the *Spectator* (1711-1714) many scenes and characters of English life, as in the Sir Roger de Coverley papers. **John Boston.** The work referred to is *Human Nature in its Fourfold State*, by Thomas Boston (1677-1732).

1125 **Schisms in our National Church.** Such struggles as those of the Covenanters (see Scott's *Old Mortality*) and that of the Old Lights and the New Lights are referred to.

1126 **The fiercer schisms in our Body Politic.** Refers to the long struggle between the adherents of the Stuarts, the Jacobites, and the government of William III, Anne, and the Georges (see Scott's *Waverley*, *A Legend of Montrose*, etc.).

1129 **Lord Kames.** Henry Home Kames (1696-1782), author of the *Elements of Criticism*.

1131 **Hume.** David Hume (1711-1776), a philosopher and author of a well-known history of England. **Robertson.** William Robertson (1721-1793), the historian. **Smith.** Adam Smith (1723-1790), author of *The Wealth of Nations*, the first celebrated English work on modern economic science.

1140 **Racine.** Jean Racine (1639-1699), a famous French classic dramatist. **Voltaire.** François Marie Arouet de Voltaire (1694-1778), one of the most renowned of French writers, a poet, dramatist, historian, and controversial writer. **Batteux.** Charles Batteux (1713-1780), a French critic of the school of Boileau.

1141 **Boileau.** Nicholas Boileau-Despreaux (1636-1711), the most famous of French critics of the classical period.

1142 **Montesquieu.** Charles de Secondat, Baron de M. (1689-1755), a French jurist and political philosopher, author of the celebrated *L'Esprit des Lois*.

1143 **Mably.** Gabriel Bonnot, Abbé de Mably (1709-1785), a French publicist.

1144 **Quesnay.** François Quesnay (1694-1774), a French economist.

1148 **La Flèche.** A town on the Loire River in France; here Hume spent some years.

1171 **Doctrine of Rent**, Adam Smith's. **Natural History of Religion**, Hume's.

1177 **Propaganda Missionaries.** A body of Roman Catholic missionaries organized to promote the faith in heretic countries.

1188 **A tide of Scottish prejudice**, etc. The quotation is somewhat altered from Burns's autobiographical letter to Dr. Moore, of August 2, 1787.

1202-11 From the poem, *To the Guidwife of Wauchope House*. See Appendix, p. 89. **Bear**, barley.

1253 **Rock of Independence**. Compare 1695 and 2079.

1331 **Let us worship God**. This and the following phrase, "priest-like father," are from *The Cotter's Saturday Night*. See Appendix, p. 101.

1351 The verses are from Wordsworth's *The Leech Gatherer*; or *Resolution and Independence*, and refer directly to Burns. Carlyle has, however, as often, been inexact. Wordsworth says:—
 "Of Him who walked in glory and in joy,
 Following his plough, along the mountain-side."

1353 **From the best evidence**, etc. Professor Noyes's note on this passage is interesting; it hints at the nature of some of Carlyle's generalizations (compare note to 882):—
 "Apparently the best 'evidence' is conflicting. Burns, in his autobiographical letter to Dr. Moore, says of himself as a boy: 'I was, perhaps, the most ungainly, awkward being in the parish.' And Murdoch, Burns's schoolmaster, in a letter printed in Currie's *Life* and reproduced in Lockhart's, says: 'Robert's ear was remarkably dull, and his voice untunable. . . . Robert's countenance was generally grave and expressive of a serious, contemplative, and thoughtful mind.'"

1391 **Adamant**. An alleged stone of surpassing hardness; here the magnetic force of the adamant, or loadstone, is alluded to.

1414 **Passions raging like demons**. Misquoted by Carlyle from the Letter to Dr. Moore.

1430 **Hungry Ruin has him in the wind**. Ruin, like a wolf, has the scent of him. The phrase is a quotation from Burns's Letter to Dr. Moore.

1433 **Gloomy night is gathering fast**. Quoted by Burns in his Letter to Dr. Moore, from the last poem which Burns supposed he should write in Scotland, *The Bonie Banks of Ayr*. See Appendix, p. 107.

1451 **A mockery king**. Shakspere, *Richard II*, iv, 1, line 260.

1453 **Rienzi.** Niccolo Gabrini Rienzi (1313–1354), the so-called “last of the tribunes” of Rome, a Roman popular leader who obtained privileges and liberty from the nobles for the people, but later became so arrogant as to lose his power and his life at the hands of the populace.

1458 **Mr. Lockhart . . .** forcible observations. *Life of Burns*, Ch. V.

1470 **Bon-mots.** Witty sayings.

1489 **Mr. Walker.** Josiah Walker, author of a life of Burns.

1493 The quotation from Scott occurs in Lockhart, Ch. V.

1494 **Virgilium vidi tantum.** I have at least seen Virgil. Ovid, *Tristia*, IV, x. 51.

1503 **Professor Ferguson.** Adam Ferguson (1723–1816), the predecessor of Dugald Stewart as professor of philosophy at Edinburgh.

1505 **Dugald Stewart.** See note to 715.

1508 **Bunbury.** Henry William Bunbury (1750–1811), an amateur artist and caricaturist.

1520 **Langhorne.** John Langhorne (1735–1779), a poet and translator of Plutarch’s *Lives*.

1528 **Mr. Nasmyth.** Alexander Nasmyth (1758–1840) painted the best known portrait of Burns in 1787. It is reproduced in this volume.

1534 **Douce gudeman.** Sedate goodman.

1553 **Allan Ramsay and of Ferguson.** See note to 184.

1558 **In malam partem.** In ill part, with malice.

1604 **Blacklock.** Thomas Blacklock (1721–1791), a blind poet, one of Burns’s most generous sympathizers.

1630 **Excise and Farm scheme.** See Introduction, Note on the Life of Burns.

1649 **Did not intend to borrow honour from any profession.** Quoted from Burns in Lockhart, Ch. VII.

1680 **Mæcenases.** Mæcenas, a friend of Augustus Cæsar, was the patron of Virgil and Horace.

1695 **The Rock of Independence.** Compare 1253 and 2079.

1708 **Meteors of French Politics.** The time was that of the Revolution in France, and the struggle for human rights appealed to Burns. See Introduction, Note on the Life of Burns.

1727 **Jacobin.** A member of one of the turbulent political clubs of Paris during the Revolution, so-called because its secret

meetings were held in the Jacobin convent in the Rue St. Jacques. See Introduction, Note on Life of Burns.

1737 **Grocerdom and Grazierdom.** Tradespeople and farmers.

1742 *Life of Burns*, Ch. VIII.

1752 **Lady Grizzel Baillie** (1665–1746), a Loyalist lady, one of the heroic figures in Scotch history.

1753–60 *Ance*, once. *Fu'*, full. *Ane*, one. *Hing*, hang. *Dowie*, sad. *Corn-bing*, corn-heap. *Sul*, should. *Linking*, tripping along. *Werena*, were not.

1773 **Now.** About 1790. See Introduction, Note on the Life of Burns.

1794 **Thoughtless follies . . . laid him low.** From *A Bard's Epitaph*. See Appendix, p. 108.

1858 **Twice cursed.** Compare *Merchant of Venice*, IV, i, 185–186 :—

“It is twice blest:
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes.”

1900 **Butler.** See note to 2.

1901 **Cervantes.** Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra (1547–1616), author of *Don Quixote*, was for a time enslaved in Algiers, and was imprisoned in Madrid for debt.

1903 **Haws.** Hedges.

1904 **Nobility and gentry of his native land . . . Scottish Bard, proud of his name and country.** A phrase bearing some resemblance to Burns's dedication to the second, or Edinburgh, edition of his poems.

1908 **Borough.** “In Scotland, a body corporate, consisting of the inhabitants of a certain district, elected by the sovereign, with a certain jurisdiction.” — Webster.

1947 **Roger Bacon** (1214?–1294), an English monk and philosopher, a student of natural science, possibly the discoverer of the secret of making gunpowder. He was imprisoned for his writings, which were thought to be heretical. **Galileo.** An Italian astronomer (1564–1642), to whom we owe the telescope; he was imprisoned for his advocacy of the now accepted Copernican theory of the movement of the solar system.

1948 **Tasso.** Torquato Tasso (1544–1595), author of the famous Italian epic poem, *Jerusalem Delivered*, was confined in a mad-house for seven years, possibly for political reasons.

Camoens. Luis de Camoens (1524?–1580), the most celebrated poet of Portugal, author of the epic poem, *The Lusiads*, spent sixteen years of his life as a soldier in Africa and India, losing an eye in the service and undergoing at least one shipwreck, and died in poverty in Lisbon.

1991 **Restaurateur.** The keeper of an eating-house or restaurant. The reference is possibly to the phenomenon, not unknown in France, of the keeper of the *cabaret* who is at the same time a ballad-maker and uses his talent to amuse his guests. There may be here, as Professor Noyes suggests, a veiled sneer at Scott and Byron,—not that they kept inns!

2019 **Locke.** John Locke (1632–1704), an English philosopher, author of the famous book referred to.

2027 **Araucana.** By Alonzo de Ercilla y Zuñiga (1533–1595); it deals with the expedition against Arauco in Chili, in which the poet took part.

2069 **Rabelais.** François Rabelais (1495–1553), a great French satirist, whose *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel* are the prototypes of Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*.

2097 **Jean Paul.** Johann Paul Friedrich Richter (1563–1625), a German moralist who had great influence on Carlyle. Carlyle wrote two essays on Jean Paul (*Edinburgh Review*, 1827, and *Foreign Review*, 1830).

2118 **Run amuck.** To assail indiscriminately, in the manner of Malays, who sometimes when intoxicated run about slashing people.

2141 **Purchased a pocket-copy of Milton to study the character of Satan.** Letter of Burns, quoted by Lockhart, Ch. VI.

2177 **He who would write, etc.** The familiar quotation from Milton is (Bartlett, *Familiar Quotations*, ninth edition, p. 253), “He who would not be frustrate of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things ought himself to be a true poem.” *Apology for Smectymnuus*.

2182 **Besing.** Apparently a coinage of Carlyle's on the analogy of such words as *bedaub*.

2211 **Plebiscita.** In English, *plebiscite*, a general popular vote.

2223 **Ginhorse.** A horse which turns a mill, going continually in a circle.

2228 **Swifts.** Jonathan Swift (1667-1744), author of *Gulliver's Travels*, and many other satirical works. **Rousseaus.** Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), a notable French philosopher and reformer.

2233 **Ramsgate.** A port on the coast of Kent, England. **Isle of Dogs.** A small peninsula in the river Thames.

2243 **Valclusa Fountain.** At Vaucluse in southern France. Here Petrarch (1304-1374), the great Italian lyric poet, passed some time, and wrote poems celebrating the fountain.

III. QUESTIONS ON THE ESSAY

I. With regard to the substance:—

1. What are the principal events in the life of Burns? Does it seem to you to have been lived under a great variety of conditions and in a vast number of places, as was, for example, that of his countryman, Robert Louis Stevenson, a typical modern writer?
2. What does the essay say with regard to Burns's personal appearance?
3. What does Carlyle say about Burns's pride and independence?
4. What about the poet's politics? What does Carlyle intend the discussion of this point to illustrate?
5. Describe the Edinburgh people of Burns's time. How far do you judge Carlyle's picture to be just?
6. Wherein does Carlyle regard Burns as a great poet?
7. What, according to Carlyle, is the nature, as regards matter and quality, of Burns's poetry?
8. What poems of Burns are apparently favorites of Carlyle, and why?
9. Why is Burns's life "far more interesting than any of his written works" (1214)? What are the main features of Burns's life as a man? How, in Carlyle's judgment, is he wanting?
10. What has Carlyle to say of Burns's letters?
11. How is what Carlyle says of Homer (496), and of Shakspeare and Burns (569) characteristic of him?
12. What do you gather from paragraph 2 with regard to the

character and point of view of Carlyle? What from paragraphs 15, 16, 40, 61, and others?

13. "Burns was no vulgar wonder" (150). Does this seem to you to express Carlyle? Compare *On Heroes and Hero-Worship*.

14. "To measure him [Burns] by any true standard" (53). What is Carlyle's standard as it appears in the essay?

15. What do Carlyle's remarks on the biographies by Currie and Walker (paragraph 3) tell you about him? What is Carlyle's notion of biography (paragraph 5)? Wherein do you infer that the lives of Burns mentioned by Carlyle fall short of this?

16. What from Carlyle's discussion of the songs of Burns should you gather to be Carlyle's conception of true lyric poetry?

17. What, in the opinion of Carlyle, are bad qualities in literature? See paragraphs 12, 32, 36, 68, and others. Can you give any illustrative examples from your own reading?

18. What of Carlyle's view of criticism? See paragraph 8.

19. What do you infer with regard to Carlyle's conception of the qualities which go to make up what he regards as the best qualities of manhood? See paragraphs 2, 8, 9, 42, 65, 68, and 70.

20. Can you make any general classification of the uses to which Carlyle puts his many quotations from Burns?

21. Whence, exactly, does Carlyle draw the following phrases: "Ask for bread and receive a stone" (3); "do men gather grapes of thorns?" (1901); "so persecuted they the prophets" (1950); "triumphed over Death, and led it captive" (1972); "cannot serve God and Mammon" (2147)? Do you note other phrases from the same source?

22. How far does Carlyle, in general, make use of quotation? What does the quotation, taken as a whole, indicate with regard to Carlyle?

23. How far does Lockhart serve Carlyle as a mere means of introducing the essay? How far does Carlyle gather his facts from Lockhart? See *Life of Burns*, by Lockhart.

24. Does Carlyle seem to you to treat one man, or one class of men, with undue disfavor for the sake of raising up others? Compare what Carlyle says with regard to Ferguson and Ramsay (page 6), certain poets (p. 10), of the prosaic age in which Burns was born (p. 6), of Byron (p. 12), of the Edinburgh people, and even of Burns himself as compared with Camoens, Cervantes, and

others. Do you note any other instances of comparison? In each case explain Carlyle's reasons for the comparison.

25. With regard to what Carlyle says in line 1322, can you give any instances of men who have changed the course of a literature? Do you deem such a thing possible? The question is a good one to think hard about. Compare what Carlyle says of Burns and Shakspere on p. 17.

26. Do you fancy it strictly true that Burns, while at Mt. Oliphant, Lochlea, and Mossgiel, before the visit to Irvine, "was the gayest, brightest, most fantastic, fascinating being to be found in the world" (1354)? Compare Burns's own words and those of his tutor, Murdoch. See note to 1353. How do you account for Carlyle's opinion? In general, do you note any inconsistency in Carlyle's position?

27. Can you cite any instances in literary history of the effects of such "lionizing" as Burns underwent?

28. Why should *red-wat-shod* be "perhaps too frightfully accurate for art" (710)?

29. Do you see any good reason for calling the state of letters in Scotland at the time of Burns an evil (1174)?

30. "But the writer of a true poem, like the apostle of a true religion, is really sure of the contrary" (7). What examples can you cite to prove the soundness of this generalization?

II. With regard to the arrangement:—

1. Can you make any general division of the Essay on Burns into Introduction, Essay Proper, and Conclusion? If so, indicate these divisions.

2. To what end does the *Life of Burns* by Lockhart serve Carlyle? See 20.

3. What value in the structure of the essay has the mention (paragraph 3) of the biographies by Currie and Walker?

4. Where does Carlyle state the purpose or imply the purpose of his essay? (As for instance in 55-57.)

5. Where may Carlyle's Introduction be said to end? Just what, if any, questions has he brought up for discussion? What do you know from the Introduction with regard to Carlyle's purpose and his point of view?

6. If there is a division of the essay which, for convenience, might be called the Essay Proper, can you subdivide this into

smaller parts? If so, with what does each of these parts deal? What is the relation of each of these parts to the other parts? Do you see any special reason why Carlyle has arranged these subdivisions in their present order? Would another arrangement have materially weakened the essay?

7. What is the function of paragraph 13? Does it seem to you to bring the discussion of the qualities of Burns into sharper outline, or to serve merely as a digression? In general, what digressions do you note in the essay? What is the purpose of each of these? See, for example, paragraphs 25 and 26.

8. Can you point out a definite conclusion to the essay? If so, where does it begin? Does this conclusion make an exact summary of the points Carlyle has made in the essay? If not, what does it do?

III. With regard to the style of the essay:—

1. What, in general, are some of the principal features that you notice with regard to the style of the essay, particularly of its words and sentences?

2. What should you say with regard to Carlyle's diction in paragraphs 7 and 12, for instance? What are some of the noteworthy features? Analyze some of the figures of speech.

3. How does Carlyle's use of specific names, as at the end of paragraph 16, lend force to his style? Does this sort of word seem frequent in the essay?

4. Do you understand just what is meant by such terms, among very many others, as "strictly intellectual perception" (713), "weak-eyed, maudlin sensibility" (726), "light" (794), and "warmth" (795), "casual radiance" (154), "sulphurous humour" (409), "natural truth of style" (439), "cobweb speculations" (567), "frightfully accurate" (711), "fervid affection" (804), "different, original, peculiar" (933), "that dark, earnest, wondering age" (949), "strictly poetical purposes" (968), "tawdry, hollow, wine-bred madrigals" (1031), "grace and truth of external movement" (1058), "mould" (1180), etc.? How many of these words and phrases are to be taken literally and as standing for exactly the defined ideas, and how many are more or less figurative? What in general, should you say of Carlyle's accuracy of language, of the size of his vocabulary, of the wealth

of his imagery, etc.? What of the connotation and suggestion of the words? Note other examples. In general, do you note many words and phrases which seem to you unusual or used with an uncommon meaning?

5. What effect on the style of the essay have such phrases as "Ask for bread and receive a stone"? (For others, see Questions with regard to the substance, 21.) In general what is the effect of the large number of phrases quoted by Carlyle? What, if anything, do they tell you about the author?

6. Does Carlyle seem to use much interrogation? What is the effect of it taken as a whole?

7. Explain, as on page 2 for example, the large number of capital letters used by Carlyle.

8. Do you understand the close of paragraph 1 to be somewhat ironical? Can you point to other instances of this manner in the essay?

9. What are the most noticeable qualities of Carlyle's manner which you observe in the essay, as for instance, warmth and earnestness? Can you, in general, say how these effects are obtained? Wherein do you deem these qualities to be characteristic of the author? Is it possible to imagine that another man might have said the same things about Burns, but have expressed his thought in a very precise and literal way?

10. Do you remark any striking differences in style between the present essay and other writings of Carlyle, as *Sartor Resartus*, *On Heroes and Hero-Worship*? Do you note more mannerism in the latter work than in the earlier? If so, explain.

NOTE:—Further questions of the same general sort, if the teacher so desires it, might be asked about the facts of Carlyle's life. There remain many questions of syntax and arrangement of sentences, as in paragraph 59, the parsing of which would tax the grammatical knowledge of the student. Such questions, however, may be left to the discretion of the teacher; in general, much insistence on them, though doubtless an aid to training for a particular examination, tends to blind the student to the main issues, competent and sympathetic knowledge of the essay.

IV. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Editions of Carlyle and of Burns, complete or of single books, are numerous, and the amount of comment is also vast. As an aid to the student some of the more important may be specified:—

Carlyle.—Of his works, the best complete edition, aside from his correspondence, is probably the Ashburton Edition, in 17 vols. (London, 1885–1888). The *Early Letters of Thomas Carlyle*, the *Correspondence between Goethe and Thomas Carlyle*, and the *Correspondence of Thomas Carlyle and Ralph Waldo Emerson*, edited by Professor Charles Eliot Norton, are the best editions of his correspondence. Of works about Carlyle, Froude's *Thomas Carlyle*, in 4 vols. (1882–1884), is the great biography. Shorter lives are those of John Nichol, in the *English Men of Letters* Series, Richard Garnett, in the *Great Writers* Series (to which there is added a very full bibliography), and Leslie Stephen, in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. Of critical essays, one should refer to those of Matthew Arnold (*Emerson in Discourses in America*), Augustine Birrell (*Obiter Dicta*), James Russell Lowell (*Prose Works*, vol. ii), John Morley (*Miscellanies*, vol. i), J. M. Robertson (*Modern Humanists*), and Leslie Stephen (*Hours in a Library*, vol. iii). Froude's edition of the *Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle* should also be spoken of.

Burns.—Of his works, the best edition is that of Dr. Robert Chambers, revised by William Wallace, in 4 vols. (*The Life and Works of Robert Burns*, New York, 1896). This contains, as far as such a thing is possible, about all the necessary material. The Centenary Edition of *The Poetry of Burns*, edited by W. E. Henley and T. F. Henderson, in 4 vols. (1896–1898), is also excellent, but includes nothing but the verse. Cheaper editions are everywhere to be found; that of the letters in the *Camelot* Series is satisfactory. Of works about Burns, Lockhart's *Life of Burns*, and the biographies by Principal Shairp, in the *English Men of Letters* Series, by J. Stuart Blackie in the *Great Writers* Series (a full bibliography is added), and by Leslie Stephen in the *Dictionary of National Biography* should be referred to. Commentary of a critical sort may also be found in literary histories, as Taine's *English Literature*, Mr. Oliphant's *Literary History of England in*

the End of the Eighteenth and the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century, and Ward's *English Poets*. Of critical essays, the chief is that printed in this volume. Those of Principal J. C. Shairp (*Aspects of Poetry*), J. M. Robertson (*New Essays toward a Critical Method*), and Robert Louis Stevenson (*Familiar Studies of Men and Books*) should also be mentioned. Mr. Robertson's opinions may be set against the glowing panegyric of Lord Rosebery (*Lectures and Addresses*).

APPENDIX

THIS appendix contains a few of the shorter poems and songs of Burns, to which Carlyle refers in his essay. It is to be regretted that there is not sufficient space to print all the poems mentioned by Carlyle, but as characteristic a selection as possible has been made, and one long poem, *The Cotter's Saturday Night*, has for obvious reasons been included. It is hoped that this selection will serve the student as an introduction to the poetry of Burns, if he has not already made the acquaintance of it, and the selection will at least enable him to compare his own impressions with those of Carlyle. The student is strongly recommended to read, in any of the scores of good editions of Burns, the other poems cited by Carlyle,— *Halloween*, *The Holy Fair*, *A Winter Night*, *The Brigs of Ayr*, *The Auld Farmer's New Year Morning Salutation to His Auld Mare Maggie*, *To William Simson*, *An Address to the De'il*, *Ode to the Memory of Mrs. Oswald*, *Tam o' Shanter*, *The Jolly Beggars*, *To the Guidwife of Wauchope House*, and *Scotch Drink*,— to gain a glimpse of other aspects of the poet's genius.

TO A MOUNTAIN DAISY

ON TURNING ONE DOWN, WITH THE PLOUGH,
IN APRIL, 1786

Cauld blew the bitter-biting North
 Upon thy early, humble birth,
 Yet cheerfully thou glinted forth
 Amid the storm,
 Scarce rear'd above the parent earth

Thy tender form.

peeped

The flaunting flow'rs our gardens yield,
 High shelt'ring woods and wa's maun shield,
 But thou beneath the random bield
 O' clod or stane,

walls
shelter

Adorns the histie stibble-field,
 Unseen, alone.

barren

There, in thy scanty mantle clad,
 Thy snawy bosom sunward spread,
 Thou lifts thy unassuming head
 In humble guise ;
 But now the share uptears thy bed,

An' low thou lies !

Such is the fate of artless maid,
 Sweet flow'ret of the rural shade !
 By love's simplicity betray'd,
 And guileless trust,
 Till she, like thee, all soil'd, is laid

Low i' the dust.

Such is the fate of simple bard
 On life's rough ocean luckless starr'd !
 Unskilful he to note the card
 Of prudent lore,
 Till billows rage, and gales blow hard,

And whelm him o'er !

chart

Such fate to suffering worth is giv'n,
 Who long with wants and woes has striv'n,
 By human pride or cunning driv'n
 To mis'ry's brink,
 Till wrench'd of ev'ry stay but Heav'n,
 He, ruin'd, sink !

Ev'n thou who mourn'st the Daisy's fate,
 That fate is thine — no distant date ;
 Stern Ruin's ploughshare drives, elate,
 Full on thy bloom,
 Till crushed beneath the furrow's weight,
 Shall be thy doom !

TO A MOUSE,

ON TURNING HER UP IN HER NEST, WITH THE
 PLOUGH, NOVEMBER, 1785

WEE, sleekit, cowrin', tim'rous beastie,
 Oh, what a panic's in thy breastie !
 Thou needna start awa' sae hasty,
 Wi' bick'ring brattle !
 I wad be laith to rin an' chase thee,
 Wi' murd'ring pattle !

sleek
little breast

hasty scam-
per
the stick
used to
scrape clay
from the
ploughshare

I'm truly sorry man's dominion
 Has broken nature's social union,
 An' justifies that ill opinion

Which makes thee startle
 At me, thy poor, earth-born companion,
 An' fellow-mortal !

I doubt na, whyles, but thou may thieve ;
 What then ? poor beastie, thou maun live !
 A daimen icker in a thrave
 'S a sma' request :
 I'll get a blessin' wi' the lave,
 And never miss't !

sometimes
an occa-
sional ear
of corn in
twenty-four
sheaves
remainder

Thy wee bit housie, too, in ruin !
 Its silly wa's the win's are strewin' !
 An' naething now to big a new ane
 O' foggage green !
 An' bleak December's winds ensuin',
 Baith snell and keen !

walls
build
moss

biting

Thou saw the fields laid bare an' waste,
 An' weary winter comin' fast,
 An' cozie here, beneath the blast,
 Thou thought to dwell,
 Till, crash ! the cruel coulter past
 Out through thy cell.

That wee bit heap o' leaves an' stibble
 Has cost thee mony a weary nibble !

Now thou's turn'd out for a' thy trouble,
 But house or hald,

To thole the winter's sleety dribble,
 An' cranreuch cauld !

But, Mousie, thou art no thy lane
 In proving foresight may be vain !

The best-laid schemes o' mice an' men
 Gang aft a-gley,

An' lea'e us nought but grief an' pain
 For promised joy.

without
house
endure —
drizzle
hoar-frost

not alone

often go
wrong

Still thou art blest, compar'd wi' me !

The present only toucheth thee :

But, och ! I backward cast my e'e

 On prospects drear !

An' forward, though I canna see,

 I guess an' fear !

ON SEEING A FELLOW WOUND A HARE

WITH A SHOT, APRIL, 1789

INHUMAN man ! curse on thy barb'rous art,
 And blasted be thy murder-aiming eye :
 May never pity soothe thee with a sigh,
 Nor ever pleasure glad thy cruel heart !

Go live, poor wand'rer of the wood and field,
 The bitter little that of life remains !

No more the thick'ning brakes and verdant plains
 To thee shall home, or food, or pastime yield.

Seek, mangled innocent, some wonted form ;
 That wonted form, alas ! thy dying bed !
 The shelt'ring rushes whistling o'er thy head,
 The cold earth with thy blood-stained bosom warm.

Perhaps a mother's anguish adds its woe ;
 The playful pair crowd fondly by thy side :
 Ah, helpless nurslings, who will now provide
 That life a mother only can bestow ?

Oft as by winding Nith I, musing, wait
 The sober eve, or hail the cheerful dawn,
 I'll miss thee sporting o'er the dewy lawn,
 And curse the ruthless wretch and mourn thy hapless fate.

OPEN THE DOOR TO ME¹

OH, open the door, some pity to shew,
 Oh, open the door to me, oh !
 Though thou hast been false, I'll ever prove true,
 Oh, open the door to me, oh !

Cauld is the blast upon my pale cheek,
 But caulder thy love for me, oh !
 The frost that freezes the life at my heart
 Is nought to my pains frae thee, oh !

The wan moon is setting behind the white wave,
 And time is setting with me, oh !
 False friends, false love, farewell ! for mair
 I'll ne'er trouble them nor thee, oh !

She has open'd the door, she has open'd it wide ;
 She sees his pale corse on the plain, oh !
 My true love ! she cried, and sank down by his side,
 Never to rise again, oh !

¹ This song belongs to 1793.

BANNOCKBURN¹

[ROBERT BRUCE'S ADDRESS TO HIS ARMY]

Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled!
 Scots, wham Bruce has often led!
 Welcome to your gory bed,
 Or to glorious victorie!

Now's the day, and now's the hour;
 See the front o' battle lower!
 See approach proud Edward's power—
 Edward! chains and slaverie!

Wha will be a traitor knave?
 Wha can fill a coward's grave?
 Wha sae base as be a slave?
 Traitor! coward! turn and flee!

Wha for Scotland's king and law
 Freedom's sword will strongly draw,
 Free-man stand, or free-man fa',
 Sodger! hero! on wi' me!

By oppression's woes and pains!
 By your sons in servile chains!
 We will drain our dearest veins,
 But they shall be—shall be free!

Lay the proud usurpers low!
 Tyrants fall in every foe!
 Liberty's in every blow!
 Forward! let us do or die!

¹ This stirring poem was composed in September, 1793. There are two or three versions of it; this is the final one.

MACPHERSON'S FAREWELL¹

FAREWELL, ye dungeons dark and strong,
The wretch's destinie !

Macpherson's time will not be long
On yonder gallows-tree.

Chorus — Sae rantingly, sae wantonly,

Sae dauntingly gaed he ;
He play'd a spring, and danc'd it round,
Below the gallows-tree.

defiantly —
went
tune

Oh what is death but parting breath ?

On many a bloody plain
I've dar'd his face, and in this place
I scorn him yet again !

Untie these bands from off my hands,
And bring to me my sword ;
And there's no a man in all Scotland
But I'll brave him at a word.

I've liv'd a life of sturt and strife ;
I die by treacherie :
It burns my heart I must depart,
And not avengèd be.

violence

Now farewell light, thou sunshine bright,
And all beneath the sky !
May coward shame distain his name,
The wretch that dares not die !

¹ " Macpherson's Lament," says Sir Walter Scott, " was a well-known song many years before the Ayrshire Bard wrote these additional verses, which constitute its principal merit. This noted freebooter was executed at Inverness about the beginning of the last century. When he came to the fatal tree, he played the tune to which he has bequeathed his name upon a favourite violin ; and, holding up the instrument, he offered it to any one of his clan who would undertake to play the tune over his body at the lyke-wake. As none answered he dashed it to pieces on the executioner's head, and flung himself from the ladder."

The poem belongs to Burns's Edinburgh period, 1788.

POOR MAILIE'S ELEGY¹

LAMENT in rhyme, lament in prose,
 Wi' saut tears tricklin' down your nose ;
 Our bardie's fate is at a close,
 Past a' remead ;
 The last sad cape-stane o' his woe's
 Poor Mailie's dead !

bard's
remedy

It's no the loss o' warl's gear,
 That could sae bitter draw the tear,
 Or mak' our bardie, dowie, wear
 The mournin' weed :
 He's lost a friend an' neebor dear
 In Mailie dead.

worn with
grief

Through a' the town she trotted by him ;
 A lang half-mile she could desery him ;
 Wi' kindly bleat, when she did spy him,
 She ran wi' speed ;
 A friend mair faithfu' ne'er came nigh him
 Than Mailie dead.

I wat she was a sheep o' sense,
 An' could behave hersel' wi' mense ;
 I'll say't, she never brak a fence
 Through thievish greed.
 Our bardie, lanely, keeps the spence
 Sin' Mailie's dead.

good man-
ners

inner room

Or, if he wanders up the howe,
 Her living image in her yowe
 Comes bleating to him, owre the knowe,
 For bits o' bread ;
 An' down the briny pearls rowe
 For Mailie dead.

dell

ewe

knoll

roll

¹ This poem belongs to the Lochlea period. Mailie wasn't really strangled, and in this fact the humor lies.

She was nae get o' moorland tips,
Wi' tautet ket, an' hairy hips;
For her forbears were brought in ships
Frae yont the Tweed:
A bonier flesh ne'er crossed the clips
Than Mailie's — dead.

rams
matted
fleece
ancestors

fleece

Wae worth the man wha first did shape
That vile, wanchancie thing — a raep!
It mak's guid fellows gирн an' gape,
Wi' chokin' dread;
An' Robin's bonnet wave wi' crape
For Mailie dead.

unlucky
grin and
gasp

O, a' ye bards on bonie Doon!
An' wha on Ayr your chanters tune!
Come, join the melancholious croon
O' Robin's reed!
His heart will never get aboon —
His Mailie's dead.

dirge
flageolet

WILLIE BREW'D A PECK O' MAUT¹

O, WILLIE brew'd a peck o' maut,
And Rob and Allan cam' to pree;
Three blyther hearts, that lee-lang night,
Ye wad na found in Christendie.

taste
live-long

Chorus — We are na fou, we're nae that fou,
But just a drappie in our e'e;
The cock may craw, the day may daw,
And ay we'll taste the barley bree.

full (drunk
drop — eye
dawn
brew, juice

Here are we met, three merry boys,
Three merry boys, I trow, are we;
And mony a night we've merry been,
And mony mae we hope to be!

¹ Composed at Ellisland in 1789.

It is the moon, I ken her horn,
 That's blinkin' in the lift sae hie ;
 She shines sae bright to wyle us hame,
 But, by my sooth, she'll wait a wee !

heavens —
 high
 lure
 while

Wha first shall rise to gang awa',
 A cuckold, coward loun is he !
 Wha first beside his chair shall fa',
 He is the king amang us three !

TO MARY IN HEAVEN¹

Tune — “Death of Captain Cook.”

THOU ling'ring star, with less'ning ray,
 That lov'st to greet the early morn,
 Again thou usher'st in the day
 My Mary from my soul was torn.
 O Mary ! dear departed shade !
 Where is thy place of blissful rest ?
 Seest thou thy lover lowly laid ?
 Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast ?
 That sacred hour can I forget ?
 Can I forget the hallowed grove
 Where, by the winding Ayr, we met,
 To live one day of parting love ?
 Eternity will not efface
 Those records dear of transports past ;
 Thy image at our last embrace —
 Ah, little thought we 'twas our last !
 Ayr, gurgling, kiss'd his pebbled shore,
 O'erhung with wild-woods, thickening green ;
 The fragrant birch, and hawthorn hoar
 Twin'd am'rous round the raptur'd scene ;
 The flowers sprang wanton to be prest,
 The birds sang love on every spray,
 Till too, too soon the glowing west,
 Proclaim'd the speed of wingèd day.

¹ To Mary Campbell. The poem was written at Ellisland some three years after her death in 1786.

Still o'er these scenes my mem'ry wakes,
 And fondly broods with miser-care !
 Time but th' impression stronger makes,
 As streams their channels deeper wear.
 My Mary, dear departed shade !
 Where is thy place of blissful rest ?
 Seest thou thy lover lowly laid ?
 Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast ?

AULD LANG SYNE¹

SHOULD auld acquaintance be forgot,
 And never brought to min' ?
 Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
 And auld lang syne ?

old

days of long ago

Chorus — For auld lang syne, my dear,
 For auld lang syne,
 We'll tak' a cup o' kindness yet,
 For auld lang syne.

And surely ye'll be your pint stowp,
 And surely I'll be mine !
 And we'll tak' a cup o' kindness yet
 For auld lang syne.

tankard

We twa ha'e run about the braes,
 And pou'd the gowans fine ;
 But we've wandered mony a weary fitt
 Sin' auld lang syne.

pulled foot

We twa ha'e paidl'd in the burn,
 Frae mornin' sun till dine ;
 But seas between us braid ha'e roared
 Sin' auld lang syne.

waded dinner-time broad

And here's a hand, my trustie fiere,
 And gie's a hand o' thine !
 And we'll tak' a right guid-willie waught,
 For auld lang syne.

friend

draught with good will

¹ This famous song is of about the end of 1788.

DUNCAN GRAY¹

DUNCAN GRAY cam' here to woo—

Ha, ha, the wooing o't!

On blithe Yule-night, when we were fu' —

Christmas

Ha, ha, the wooing o't!

Maggie coost her head fu' high,

tossed [coy

Looked asklent and unco skeigh,

aslant, very

Gart poor Duncan stand abeigh ;

made —

Ha, ha, the wooing o't.

aloof

Duncan fleech'd, and Duncan pray'd —

besought

Ha, ha, &c.

Meg was deaf as Ailsa Craig —

Ha, ha, &c.

Duncan sigh'd baith out and in,

wept —

Grat his een baith bleer't and blin',

bleared and

Spak' o' lowpin' o'er a linn,

blind

Ha, ha, &c.

jumping —

waterfall

Time and chance are but a tide —

Ha, ha, &c.

Slighted love is sair to bide —

hard —

Ha, ha, &c.

Shall I, like a fool, quoth he,

endure

For a haughty hizzie die ?

hussy

She may gae to — France for me !

Ha, ha, &c.

How it comes let doctors tell —

Ha, ha, &c.

Meg grew sick as he grew hale —

Ha, ha, &c.

Something in her bosom wrings,

eyes — such

For relief a sigh she brings ;

And oh ! her een, they spak' sic things !

Ha, ha, &c.

¹ Composed toward the end of 1792.

Duncan was a lad o' grace —

Ha, ha, &c.

Maggie's was a piteous case —

Ha, ha, &c.

Duncan could na be her death,

Swelling pity smoord his wrath ;

Now they're crouse and canty baith,

Ha, ha, the wooing o't!

smothered
cheerful and
happy both

THE COTTER'S SATURDAY NIGHT¹

[Inscribed to R. AIKEN, Esq.]

Let not ambition mock their useful toil,

Their homely joys, and destiny obscure ;

Nor grandeur hear, with a disdainful smile,

The short and simple annals of the poor.—GRAY.

My lov'd, my honour'd, much respected friend !

No mercenary bard his homage pays ;

With honest pride I scorn each selfish end,

My dearest meed, a friend's esteem and praise :

To you I sing, in simple Scottish lays,

The lowly train in life's sequester'd scene ;

The native feelings strong, the guileless ways ;

What Aiken in a cottage would have been ;

Ah ! though his worth unknown, far happier there, I
ween.

November chill blaws loud wi' angry sugh ;

moan

The short'ning winter-day is near a close ;

The miry beasts retreating frae the pleugh ;

The black'ning trains o' crows to their repose :

crows

The toil-worn Cotter frae his labour goes, —

This night his weekly moil is at an end,

Collects his spades, his mattocks, and his hoes,

Hoping the morn in ease and rest to spend.

And weary, o'er the moor his course does homeward
bend.

¹ Composed at Mossiel.

At length his lonely cot appears in view,
 Beneath the shelter of an agèd tree ;
 The expectant wee-things, toddlin' stacher through
 To meet their dad, wi' flichterin' noise an' glee.
 His wee bit ingle, blinkin' bonilie,
 His clean hearthstane, his thriftie wifie's smile,
 The lisping infant prattling on his knee,
 Does a' his weary kiaugh and cares beguile,
 An' makes him quite forget his labour an' his toil.

stagger
 fluttering
 fire, or fire-
 place

anxiety

Belyve, the elder bairns come drappin' in,
 At service out, amang the farmers roun' ;
 Some ca' the pleugh, some herd, some tentie rin
 A cannie errand to a neebor town :
 Their eldest hope, their Jenny, woman grown,
 In youthfu' bloom, love sparkling in her e'e,
 Comes hame ; perhaps, to shew a braw new gown,
 Or deposite her sair-won penny-fee,
 To help her parents dear, if they in hardship be.

by and by

careful
 private

hard-earned
 wages

Wi' joy unfeign'd brothers and sisters meet,
 An' each for other's welfare kindly spiers :
 The social hours, swift-wing'd, unnoticed fleet ;
 Each tells the uncos that he sees or hears.
 The parents, partial, eye their hopeful years ;
 Anticipation forward points the view.
 The mother, wi' her needle an' her shears,
 Gars auld claes look amait as weel's the new ;
 The father mixes a' wi' admonition due.

inquires

news

makes —
 clothes

Their master's an' their mistress's command,
 The younkers a' are warnèd to obey ;
 An' mind their labours wi' an eydent hand,
 An' ne'er, though out o' sight, to jauk or play :
 "An' O ! be sure to fear the Lord alway !
 An' mind your duty duly, morn an' night !
 Lest in temptation's path ye gang astray,
 Implore His counsel and assisting might :
 They never sought in vain that sought the Lord
 aright !"

diligent
 dally

But hark ! a rap comes gently to the door
Jenny, wha kens the meaning o' the same,
Tells how a neebor lad cam' o'er the moor,
To do some errands, and convoy her hame.
The wily mother sees the conscious flame
Sparkle in Jenny's e'e, and flush her cheek ;
With heart-struck anxious care, inquires his name,
While Jenny hafflins is afraid to speak :
Weel pleas'd the mother hears it's nae wild, worthless
rake.

Wi' kindly welcome Jenny brings him ben,
A strappin' youth ; he taks the mother's eye ;
Blythe Jenny sees the visit's no ill ta'en ;
The father cracks of horses, pleughs, and kye :
The youngster's artless heart o'erflows wi' joy,
But blate and laithfu', scarce can weel behave ;
The mother, wi' a woman's wiles, can spy,
What makes the youth sae bashfu' an' sae grave ;
Weel pleas'd to think her bairn's respected like the
lave.

almost

O happy love! where love like this is found!
O heartfelt raptures! bliss beyond compare!
I've pacèd much this weary, mortal round,
And sage experience bids me this declare —
“ If Heaven a draught of heavenly pleasure spare,
One cordial in this melancholy vale,
’Tis when a youthful, loving, modest pair,
In other’s arms breathe out the tender tale,
Beneath the milk-white thorn that scents the evening
gale.”

not ill received
cows

bashful —
sheepish

rest

rest

Is there, in human form, that bears a heart,
A wretch ! a villain ! lost to love and truth !
That can, with studied, sly, ensnaring art,
Betray sweet Jenny's unsuspecting youth ?
Curse on his perjur'd arts ! dissembling smooth !
Are honour, virtue, conscience, all exil'd ?
Is there no pity, no relenting ruth,

Points to the parents fondling o'er their child ?
 Then paints the ruined maid, and their distraction
 wild ?

But now the supper crowns their simple board,
 The halesome parritch, chief o' Scotia's food ;
 The sowpe their only hawkie does afford,
 That 'yont the hallan snugly chows her cood :
 The dame brings forth in complimentary mood,
 To grace the lad, her weel-hain'd kebbuck, fell,
 An' aft he's prest, an' aft he ca's it guid ;
 The frugal wifie, garrulous, will tell,
 How 'twas a towmond auld, sin' lint was i' the bell.

porridge
 food — cow
 porch —
 chews her
 cud
 well-
 matured
 cheese
 twelve-
 month —
 flax was in
 the flower

The cheerfu' suppér done, wi' serious face,
 They round the ingle form a circle wide ;
 The sire turns o'er, wi' patriarchal grace,
 The big ha' Bible, ance his father's pride :
 His bonnet rev'rently is laid aside,
 His lyart haffets wearing thin an' bare ;
 Those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide,
 He wales a portion with judicious care ;
 And "Let us worship God !" he says, with solemn air.

hall
 grey locks
 chooses

They chant their artless notes in simple guise ;
 They tune their hearts, by far the noblest aim,
 Perhaps "Dundee's" wild, warbling measures rise,
 Or plaintive "Martyrs," worthy of the name ;
 Or noble "Elgin" beets the heavenward flame,
 The sweetest far of Scotia's holy lays :
 Compar'd with these, Italian trills are tame ;
 The tickl'd ears no heartfelt raptures raise ;
 Nae unison hae they with our Creator's praise.

fans

The priest-like father reads the sacred page,
 How Abram was the friend of God on high ;
 Or Moses bade eternal warfare wage
 With Amalek's ungracious progeny ;
 Or how the royal bard did groaning lie
 Beneath the stroke of Heaven's avenging ire ;

Or Job's pathetic plaint, and wailing cry ;
 Or rapt Isaiah's wild, seraphic fire ;
 Or other holy seers that tune the sacred lyre.

Perhaps the Christian volume is the theme,
 How guiltless blood for guilty man was shed ;
 How He, who bore in Heaven the second name,
 Had not on earth whereon to lay His head :
 How His first followers and servants sped ;
 The precepts sage they wrote to many a land :
 How he, who lone in Patmos banishèd,
 Saw in the sun a mighty angel stand ;
 And heard great Bab'l'on's doom pronounced by
 Heaven's command.

Then kneeling down, to Heaven's Eternal King,
 The saint, the father, and the husband prays :
 Hope "springs exulting on triumphant wing,"
 That thus they all shall meet in future days :
 There, ever bask in uncreated rays,
 No more to sigh, or shed the bitter tear,
 Together hymning their Creator's praise,
 In such society, yet still more dear ;
 While circling time moves round in an eternal sphere.

Compar'd with this, how poor Religion's pride,
 In all the pomp of method, and of art,
 When men display to congregations wide,
 Devotion's ev'ry grace, except the heart !
 The Power, incens'd, the pageant will desert,
 The pompous strain, the sacerdotal stole ;
 But haply, in some cottage far apart,
 May hear, well pleas'd, the language of the soul ;
 And in His Book of Life the inmates poor enrol.

Then homeward all take off their several way ;
 The youngling cottagers retire to rest :

The parent pair their secret homage pay,
 And proffer up to Heaven the warm request,
 That He who stills the raven's clam'rous nest,

as only God could do.

And decks the lily fair in flow'ry pride,
 Would, in the way His wisdom sees the best,
 For them and for their little ones provide ;
 But chiefly, in their hearts with grace divine preside.

From scenes like these old Scotia's grandeur ^{sightly increases} springs, ^{doesn't spring} metaphor
 That makes her lov'd at home, rever'd abroad :
 Princes and lords are but the breath of kings,
 "An honest man's the noblest work of God :" ^{quotation}
 And certes, in fair virtue's heavenly road,
 The cottage leaves the palace far behind ; ^{metaphor}
 What is a lordling's pomp ! a cumbrous load,
 Disguising oft the wretch of human kind,
 Studied in arts of hell, in wickedness refin'd !

O Scotia ! my dear, my native soil !
 For whom my warmest wish to Heaven is sent !
 Long may thy hardy sons of rustic toil
 Be blest with health, and peace, and sweet content !
 And, O ! may Heaven their simple lives prevent
 From luxury's contagion, weak and vile !
 Then, howe'er crowns and coronets be rent,
 A virtuous populace may rise the while, ^{common}
 And stand a wall of fire around their much-lov'd isle.

O Thou ! who pour'd the patriotic tide ^{base of our country} greetings
 That stream'd through Wallace's undaunted heart ;
 Who dar'd to nobly stem tyrannic pride,
 Or nobly die, the second glorious part :
 (The patriot's God peculiarly thou art,
 His friend, inspirer, guardian, and reward !)
 O never, never, Scotia's realm desert ;
 But still the patriot, and the patriot bard,
 In bright succession raise, her ornament and guard !

THE BONIE BANKS OF AYR¹

Tune — “ Roslin Castle ”

THE gloomy night is gath’ring fast,
 Loud roars the wild inconstant blast;
 Yon murky cloud is foul with rain,
 I see it driving o’er the plain;
 The hunter now has left the moor,
 The scatter’d coveys meet secure,
 While here I wander, prest with care,
 Along the lonely banks of Ayr.

The Autumn mourns her rip’ning corn
 By early Winter’s ravage torn ;
 Across her placid, azure sky
 She sees the scowling tempest fly :
 Chill runs my blood to hear it rave ;
 I think upon the stormy wave,
 Where many a danger I must dare,
 Far from the bonie banks of Ayr.

’Tis not the surging billow’s roar ;
 ’Tis not that fatal, deadly shore ;
 Though Death in every shape appear,
 The wretched have no more to fear :
 But round my heart the ties are bound,
 That heart transpierc’d with many a wound ;
 These bleed afresh, those ties I tear,
 To leave the bonie banks of Ayr.

Farewell, old Coila’s hills and dales !
 Her heathy moors and winding vales ;
 The scenes where wretched Fancy roves,
 Pursuing past, unhappy loves !
 Farewell, my friends ! farewell, my foes !
 My peace with these, my love with those : —
 The bursting tears my heart declare,
 Farewell, the bonie banks of Ayr !

¹ Composed when the poet thought of leaving Scotland and going to the West Indies.

A BARD'S EPITAPH¹

Is there a whim-inspirèd fool,
 Owre fast for thought, owre hot for rule,
 Owre blate to seek, owre proud to snool?
 Let him draw near;
 And owre this grassy heap sing dool,
 And drap a tear.

too
 bashful —
 submit
 tamely —
 over —
 lament

Is there a bard of rustic song
 Who, noteless, steals the crowds among,
 That weekly this area throng?
 O, pass not by!
 But with a frater-feeling strong,
 Here heave a sigh.

Is there a man whose judgment clear
 Can others teach the course to steer,
 Yet runs, himself, life's mad career
 Wild as the wave?
 Here pause — and, through the starting tear,
 Survey this grave.

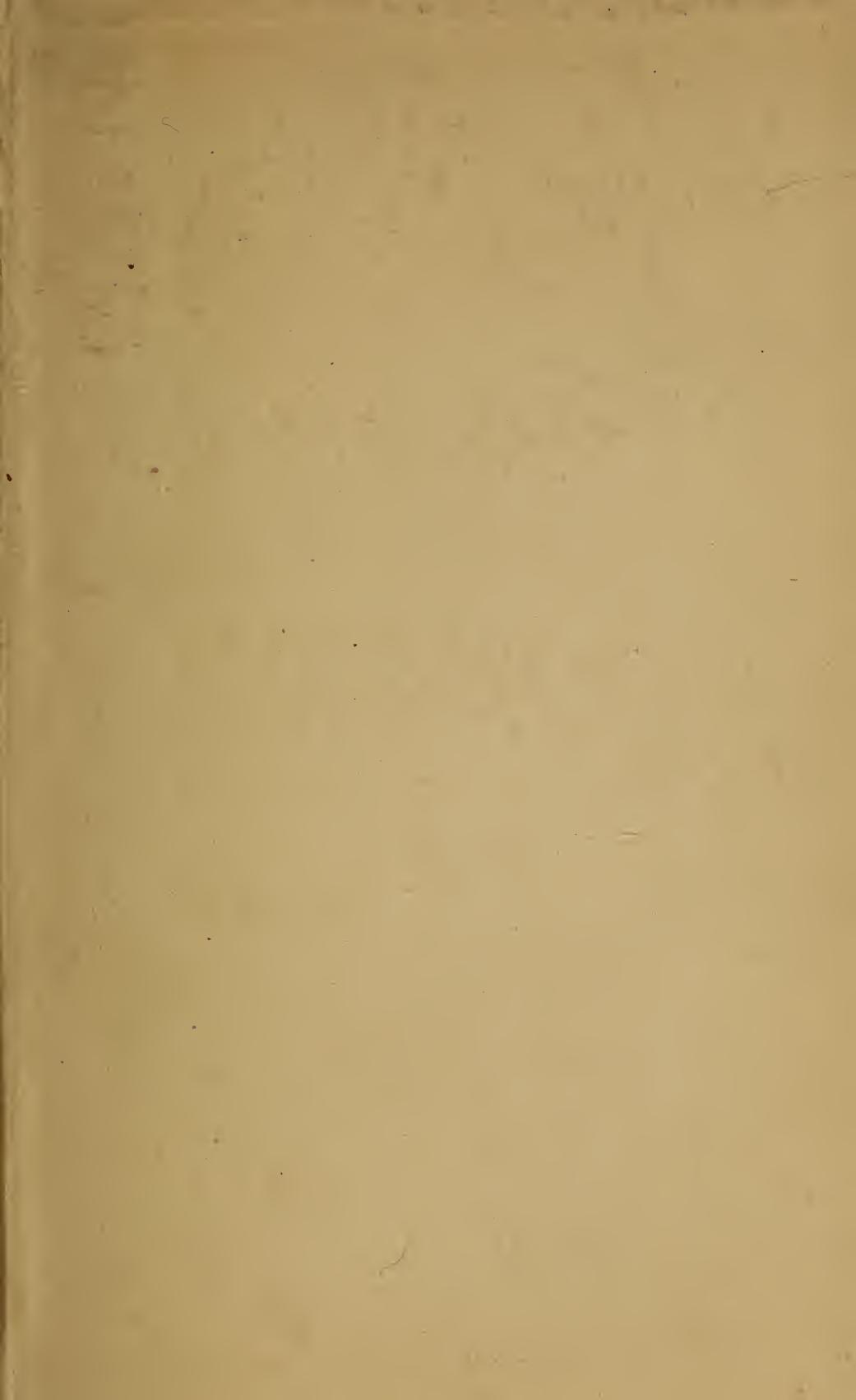
The poor inhabitant below
 Was quick to learn, and wise to know,
 And keenly felt the friendly glow,
 And softer flame,
 But thoughtless follies laid him low,
 And stain'd his name!

Reader, attend! Whether thy soul
 Soars Fancy's flights beyond the pole,
 Or darkling grubs this earthly hole
 In low pursuit;
 Know, prudent, cautious self-control
 Is Wisdom's root.

¹ This belongs to Burns's residence at Mossiel.

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